Girl freed after ransom paid; No.4 kidnapper falls

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Friday, December 5, 2003 + 28 pages / vol. 18 / no. 260

Officer slams PNP chief, gets sacked

MATILLANO: PNP chief's no-greases.

A Cretan of command through uniformers and there stands behind the Philippine National Police Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. as he holds a press conference in Camp Crame to answer a subordinate who's demanding his resignation for his alleged "weak leadership" and "corruption." A PNP revamp has reportedly set off a wave of demoralization in the ranks. PHOTOGRAPHER

Matillano: Graft rife under Ebdane watch

By Christine Y. Esguerra

IN-FIGHTING in the Philippine National Police may be distracting it from fighting crime.

The row took a turn for the worse when Director Eduardo Matillano demanded the resignation of Philippine National Police chief Hermogenes Ebdane Jr., whom he accused of weak leadership and massive corruption.

There is reportedly a wave of demoralization among police officers with some threatening to go on mass leave as a result of what the disgruntled called a "faulty and illegal" revamp in the PNP.

Ebdane did not let the accusations pass. The PNP chief promptly fired Matillano as head of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group.

In charge allegations of his weak and "indecisive" leadership, Ebdane announced the sacking of Matillano at a press conference while senior officers stood behind him.

Ebdane ordered the revamp implemented effective Dec. 1, only to stay the appointments to 17 posts the following day. He said he would ignore observations that his leadership was weak.

"We have to consider some other matters beyond our authority," he told reporters. "We have to make it that everything is in order before we take action. Now, even decisions are subject to change."

Because of the "destabilization" purportedly caused by the revamp, Matillano said several officers were planning to seek a temporary restraining order to keep Ebdane from implementing

CONTINUED ON A10

Girl freed; No. 4 kidnapper arrested

By Christian V. Esguerra and Juliet Labog-Javellana

LUKE HAIN after a drought comes good news in connection with the kidnap for ransom summer: the release yesterday of the 10-year-old Chinese-Filipino girl snatched in Manila on Nov. 25, the arrest hours later of six of her abductors and the arrest of the fourth most wanted kidnap gang leader.

The child, who was kidnapped while on her way to school in Pasay, Manila, was released after her family paid ransom, according to Senecia Ang-See, head of the Citizens' Action Against Crime.

"I think we can all breathe a collective sigh of relief. We were very thankful that she was released," Ang-See told reporters in Malacañang, where she and other leaders of the Chinese-Filipino community attended a meeting on the government's integrated plan to address the kidnapping problem lately on the upsurge.

Ang-See said that ransom was paid and that the child's family did not seek police or military assistance for the child's rescue.

"Yes, unfortunately, there was no choice but to pay ransom," she said.

She also said the family was hard put to produce the original amount demanded by the kidnappers and was only able to raise something "much, much smaller."

The kidnappers reportedly demanded from P50 million to P20 million for the child's freedom.

STORY A10

US judge clears way for Atong's extradition

By Philip C. Tubeza

CHARLIE "Atong" Ang's luck has run out.

A US judge has paved the way for an extradition hearing of ousted President Joseph Estrada's gambling buddy and co-accused in a historic plunder trial in the Philippines.

The District Court of Nevada has yet to set a hearing date for Ang's extradition.

According to a report by the Associated Press, Ang remained free on Wednesday and has applied for political asylum in the United States.

Justice Undersecretary Ma. Mer-

STORY A10

Spice Boys coin GMA's battle cry

By Carlito Pablo

MANY fill the "Spice Boys" of old have lost their sting. Two of them have snubbed the President's campaign slogan for the May elections, and it seems to have everything but spice.

According to Rep. Juan Miguel Zubiri (Lakas, Bukidnon), President Macapagal-Arroyo's battle cry is now "2010 para di bitin!"

Strictly translated, the slogan has the less than emphatic ring of the following:

STORY A10

Lakas wins some, loses some to Roco

By Carlito Pablo and Juliet L. Javellana

THE RULING Lakas-CMD party yesterday proudly showed off its latest prize catch: Nacionalist People's Coalition stalwart Mayor Edward Hagedorn of Puerto Princesa.

Hagedorn was one of the friends who stayed with then President Joseph Estrada until his last hours in Malacañang in January 2001.

A beaming President Macapagal-Arroyo thanked Hagedorn profusely for joining her party. "Thank you, thank you very much. We're happy to have you on board."

But on the same day, Lakas maverick Rep. Jacinto Paras (Negros Oriental) predicted that many of his party members would leave Lakas to join presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr., "especially if this pro-FPJ trend in the surveys continues."

"I hope I will not be the one to lead the exodus," Paras said. "But the exodus is inevitable."

Rep. Juan Miguel Zubiri (Lakas, Bukidnon), a member of the President's campaign team, conceded that the administration camp "may lose a few to FPJ."

But Lakas members are also defecting to the camp of ex-Education Secretary Raul Roco.

Earlier, Rep. Oscar Moreno

LAKAS A10

WOOING'S majority! Sen. Panfilo Lacson gets the presidential nomination from his party mates, but some stayed away from the proclamation rally at the Cuneta Pavilion in San Juan on Thursday. PHOTOGRAPHER

LDP 'nominates' Lacson; that's illegal, says Angara

By Christine O. Avendaño

SEN. Panfilo Lacson was nominated yesterday standard-bearer of the Lakas ng Demokratikong Pilipino by his party mates, who claimed that the endorsement had the support of "90 percent" of the LDP.

Even with his nomination, however, Lacson and LDP leaders said they wanted a reconciliation with party president Sen. Edgardo Angara, who is supporting presidential aspirant Fernando Poe Jr.

Angara, who presided over the mass oath-taking of new LDP members yesterday, dismissed Lacson's nomination as "unauthorized" and "illegal." But he said he was open to a dialogue upon learning of the party leaders' desire to meet with him.

Makati Rep. Agapito Aquino, LDP secretary general, said he foresaw both Lacson and Poe filing their respective candidacies

LDP A10

ANGARA: "Unauthorized" but I'm open to dialogue. FILE PHOTO

Noli for president group to gather 3M signatures

By Norman Bordadora

NOT to be outdone by the FPJ for President Movement, a group announced yesterday a nationwide campaign to gather more than three million signatures to convince Sen. Noli "Kabayan" de Castro to run for president.

With less than 10 days before candidates begin filing their candidacy, the Kabayan for President Movement (KPM) said it would gather one million signatures each in Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao.

It took about 10 months for the FPJ for President Movement to gather two million signatures, which they presented to actor Fernando Poe Jr. on Oct. 25. Incorrigible

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2003

WEATHER FORECAST

PORTLAST: The entire country will experience partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms mostly over the luzon provinces.

Second FRONTPAGE

Polls to be fully automated

By Marvin P Mardi

THE COMMISSION on Elections yesterday announced that nationwide computerized elections will be a reality next May after it was learned that a congressional joint resolution amending the Election Automation Law of 1997 to provide for reformed automation had not been transmitted for action to Malacañang.

Six months, the poll body claimed to have been "stymied" by the impending congressional resolution which it said effectively amended the law.

Because of this, the Comelec issued its own resolution proposing the holding of "hybrid" automation of the vote, a system by which some areas would have computerized, and others manual, elections.

The Comelec was even prompted at one point to ask Malacañang by letter to veto the bicameral resolution calling for an automated count in 55 selected areas.

But apparently, all these moves were unnecessary as the resolution was never transmitted to Malacañang.

As of yesterday, Comelec chair Benjamin Abalos said Malacañang had not received the congressional resolution, prompting the poll body to announce that there will be nationwide automation after all.

Abalos said he had been told by presidential legislative liaison Gabriel Claudio that Congress had not forwarded the resolution to Malacañang more than two weeks after it was approved by a bicameral conference committee on Nov. 19.

"Claudio told me that there was nothing to act upon because as of yesterday, Malacañang has not received [the resolution]," Abalos said at a press briefing.

It could not be ascertained if any congressional officials tried happened to the plans of supposedly urgent legislation, according to Noel Albano, the House deputy secretary general for media. Speaker Jose de Venecia signed the resolution two days ago. But Albano could not say what happened next.

The Election Automation Law, or R.A. 8436 passed in December 1997, provided for the computerization of elections, from the recording to the printing to the canvassing and consolidation of votes on the municipal and national levels.

The purpose is to make the electoral process more efficient and therefore extensive, if not totally eliminate, opportunities for cheating which have become a permanent feature of Philippine elections.

The poll body had called yesterday's press conference in an apparent bid to allay fears of massive cheating during new May's elections, as some candidates for high office have alleged.

Comelec officials maintained that the agency's automated counting machines (ACMs) cannot be tampered with, especially if paper ballots are used.

They claimed that the machines would not be capable of reading ballots from another municipality and previously "read" votes as.

Full text of the public congressional the Comelec's capability to conduct nationwide automation stems from the poll body's being in possession of only 2,567 automated counting machines—with 1,000 machines to arrive—but would be used to process the votes in 250,000 precincts nationwide.

Abalos has insisted that it can be done in 12,000 ACMs can handle 20,000 ballots each.

But Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. thinks otherwise, citing experts' estimates that there must be at least two ACMs per city or town. Based on this estimate, the 1,000 cities and towns would require 1,210 ACMs, by and.

At yesterday's press conference, Comelec officials warned those planning to cheat that if they try to "outwit" or stuff fake ballots into the boxes before the count, there would only be one result...failure of elections in their areas.

Gov't, Moro rebs set to start peace talks in January

By Jaycee Arong and TJ Burgonio

RESUMPTION of the formal peace talks between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front will take place in the first week of January next year, according to Foreign Secretary Blas Ople.

Ople yesterday said the information was relayed to him by the Malaysian government, which is hosting the negotiations, through Hussein Alidin, head of the Philippine negotiating team, who arrived from Kuala Lumpur the other day.

Speaking during his weekly press conference, Ople said negotiating teams were working closely to establish the parameters for a planned international monitoring team led by Malaysia that would oversee a truce.

He said he would ask Malaysia to send an advance team to Mindanao this month to monitor the ceasefire once formal talks begin.

As a condition for the resumption of talks, the MILF is demanding the immediate pullout of troops from the Buliok complex in North Cotabato, which the government seized early this year.

Ople said military officials were concerned on "a phased to withdrawal," and willing to withdraw as far as 1.5 kilometers from the complex.

The secretary did not mention another condition that the 12,000-strong MILF had given: withdrawal of pending arrest warrants against it's leaders.

But in part, the government wants the MILF to give greater proof that it was renouncing terrorism.

"The MILF should show more sincerity in its stated desire to dissociate from terrorist groups like Jemaah Islamiyah and Abu Sayyaf," Ople said.

Believed to be the Southeast Asian arm of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network, the JI is blamed for the bid bombings last year and Manila's in 2000. The MILF has denied government claims that it provided sanctuary and training to some JI militants.

Benjie Mitimberg, chair of the MILF coordinating committee on the cessation of hostilities, met with his government counterpart, military vice chief of staff Lt. Gen. Ernesto Rodolfo Ermita, in Davao City on Tuesday.

In a joint statement issued after the meeting, Mitimberg vowed to help the military flush out terror suspects and verify military reports that nine of its commanders had entered JI operations in the MILF training camps.

Ermita, in a press conference in Camp Aguinaldo yesterday said the MILF would assist in all anti-JI operations, "whether there... it's intelligence or assisted in custody." He did not rule out the possibility that low-ranking members of the MILF continued to maintain ties with the terror group.

Vice President Teofisto Guingona Jr. yesterday urged President Macapagal-Arroyo not to allow the campaign against terrorist groups to derail the peace talks.

Speaking before a peace advocacy forum at the Ateneo de Manila University, Guingona said the talks had been stabilized by anti-terror efforts.

"Let not unverified charges of terrorist training camps deter the quest for peace," Guingona said. "The leaders of the MILF desire an honorable and meaningful peace." With an AFP report

No bail for mutineers

THE MAKATI Regional Trial Court Branch 61 has found probable cause for the filing of coup d'etat charges against the leaders of the July 27 Oakwood mutiny and has ordered them held, according to the Department of Interior and Local Government.

Interior Undersecretary Agnes Devanadera said Judge Romeo Buss had approved the "no-bail" recommendation of government lawyers against Lt. (s.g.) Antonio Trillanes IV and 30 other junior military officers after finding probable cause against them. She said Buss set the arraignment of the accused on Dec. 15.

Devanadera, head of the GILG legal team tasked to assist the justice department in prosecuting the mutineers, said Buss also granted the motion to dismiss the charges against 209 other soldiers earlier charged in connection with the Oakwood mutiny.

After a careful evaluation of the resolutions of the Department of Justice Panel of Investigating Prosecutors and the evidence on record, the Court is satisfied that there exists probable cause for the issuance of commitment orders against all the accused," Devanadera quoted Buss in his order.

Trillanes and the other accused have been charged by the justice department with coup d'etat.

The other accused were Capt. Nilo Maestrecampo, Garry Alejano, Lawrence Louis Sotto, Gerardo Gambala, Maximo Beldoza, Albert Baldog, Segundino Orillano, John Andrus, and Alex Alinea.

Lt. (s.g.) Antonio Leong, Manuel Cabochan, Eugene Louie Gonzales, Andy Torres and Lt. (j.g.) Ivanovi Pastrana.

Ptt Lieutenants Florentino Reñares, Cleo Dungon, Jimmy Sarmiento, Andis Tuvera, Ric Reyes, Roi Belo, Lawrence Sui-Juan, Pharon Ian Dagupan, Nathaniel Reñares, Jomel Sanggalang, Billy Swan and Francisco Ashley Sendiko.

Second Lt. Reinoffer Reyes Bunag, Ensign Armand Palmiano, Ptt Cesar Sindanlan and Ptt Arthur Mora. Rebecca Flores

'POLITICAL ESTAFA'

SWS survey rigged to favor FPJ–Roco

By Dona Pazolbuyan

NOMARD senator and presidential aspirant Raul Roco yesterday accused the head of the Social Weather Stations of manipulating their survey in favor actor Fernando Poe Jr.

Roco said SWS president Mahar Mangahas was using his survey to "influence" the public.

Roco found it highly unlikely that Poe would leap from fourth place in the SWS survey in September to first place in the November survey.

Poe overtook Sen. Nikki de Castro, Roco and President Macapagal-Arroyo in the latest survey.

"I think that's (Mangahas') statistically improbable to jump that much," Roco said when interviewed.

"The only explanation is that he (Mangahas) is a cronie of Poe."

Mangahas and Poe are first cousins, as their mothers are sisters.

"The problem in the survey is trying to influence instead of just measure (voter) preference).

"Clearly the relation (between Poe and Mangahas) is a factor," Roco continued.

The other day, Mangahas shrugged off questions on the credibility of his surveys owing to his relation with Poe.

Mangahas said Poe has no connection with their work.

In vibe, Roco said Mangahas has "no definition."

"The person surveying is now pretending to speak for the people. That's political results," Roco said.

He said what the SWS is doing is "no longer science, it's already biased."

Roco maintained that voters opinion surveys are just "madaraya."

Roco, who consistently ranks high in surveys, said he was not in favor of publishing survey results since they tend to influence the public.

SWS said Poe jumped by 9 percentage points, from 14 percent in the Aug. 30 to Sept. 14 survey to 23 percent in the Nov. 8-21 survey. At the time Poe has not even announced his candidacy.

De Castro meanwhile slid from 26 percent to 24 percent while Roco dropped from 20 percent to 18 percent.

Mr. Macapagal and Sen. Panfilo Lacson's share did not change at 17 percent and 16 percent, respectively.

In the Intern Pulse Asia survey conducted on Nov. 4-17, Roco tied in a third of four.

He got 30 percent of the votes, followed by Mr. Macapagal and Poe with 28 percent, and Lacson with 13 percent.

Imelda asks SC to stop forfeiture of $683M

By Philip C. Tubeza

IMELDA Marcos, the widow of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, yesterday asked the Supreme Court not to act on a motion from the Solicitor General asking the high court to immediately issue a writ of execution to enforce its ruling forfeiting $683 million to the Philippine government.

In her petition opposing the motion, Imelda said the high court must first resolve her pending motion for it to accept her second motion for reconsideration against the SC ruling on the Marcos assets before acting on the Solicitor General's motion.

She also said that a standing "freeze" order from a United States Judge Manuel Real on Marcos assets being held in banks across the globe had nullified the SC ruling on the Marcos deposits.

And in another urgent motion yesterday, Imelda also urged the SC to suspend its rules and accept her second motion for reconsideration.

Appeal rejected

In its Nov. 18 decision that affirmed its July 15 ruling with finality that the $683 million was ill-gotten and belonged to the Philippine government, the high court rejected an appeal from the Marcoses saying they failed to raise any new issues for it to reconsider its decision.

The high tribunal usually does not entertain second motions for reconsideration but Imelda was insistent that her second motion had "new and substantial issues."

Imelda argued that the ruling forfeiting the $683 million Marcos Swiss deposits was worthless because of Hawaii Judge Manuel Real's injunction last September ordering all banks holding Marcos assets not to transfer the money.

Because of the injunction, "any confirmation order of the Republic of the Philippines regarding the $683 million will just amount to multo-amusing paper confirmation," she said.

The Real injunction was the result of a 1990 ruling by the Hawaii judge awarding about $1.56 billion in damages from the Marcos estate to 9,500 victims of rights abuses by the Marcos regime.

Nov. 18 ruling

In its Nov. 18 ruling, the high court took judicial notice of the Real order but rejected it for "transgressing not only the principle of territoriality" in public international law but also the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court.

Imelda argued that the Real injunction did not transgress the SC's integrity and jurisdiction as its orders cover only banking institutions and not the high court.

Imelda's lawyer Oliver Lozano said the Marcoses had new motion to take before the high court.

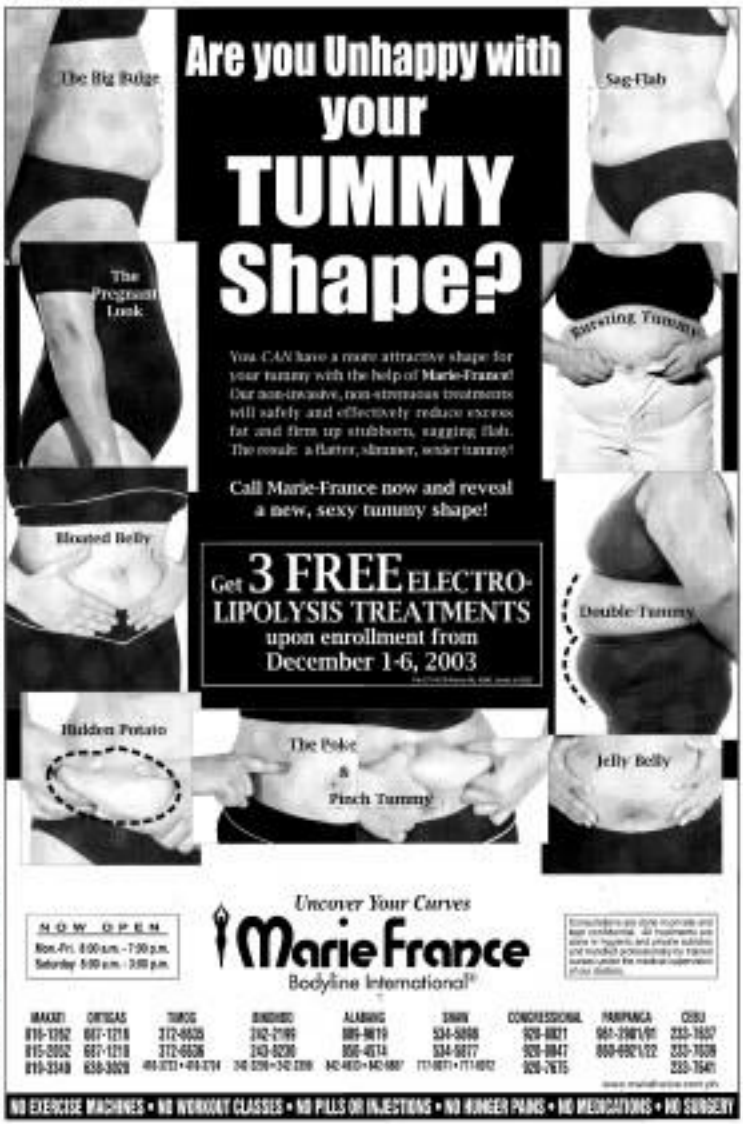
He claimed that the Swiss federal Supreme Court's condition for the release of the deposits...the final criminal conviction of the Marcoses—had not been complied with.

He also argued that "assuming without admitting, that the $683 million is ill-gotten," the assets be distributed not prescribed under the 1987 Constitution.

Lozano said that the prosecution of Equitable under the Estimation Republic Act 1379 of 1955, had been superseded by the 1987 Constitution.

He claimed that the prosecution of 33 private wealth related where the Sandiganbayan allegedly forced on prima facie evidence of the Marcoses having ill-gotten wealth.

He suggested that instead of the deposits being confiscated, the money should instead be given directly to the people through the Marcos Foundation as the dictator Marcos allegedly stated to a banker here while April 1971.



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METRO
Editor Abdon S. Manlapaz

SUPERLOTTO 6/49 6 18 20 33 37

METROBRIEFS

Bloody pants tell all

A PAIR of bloody pants yesterday led to the arrest of the suspected killer of security guard Lupetito C. Bacay Jr., who was found dead inside the ladies' comfort room of a Manila building on Wednesday. SPO2 Virgo Villareal said the bloody pants belonged to Rodolfo Domingo Jr., the maintenance man of the Pacific Center building on Juan Luna Street in Binondo. Domingo had identified the one who killed Bacay. But Villareal said Domingo had admitted to police that he owned the bloody pants. Jaime Laudeta

Killer cop nailed

PO1 ELADIO Bisaya formerly of the Caloocan City Police, yesterday, was arrested in Sta. Cruz, Laguna. Members of Bisaya's arrest team walked out, Rolando Bellido, 24, rushed to the police station and identified Bisaya as one of three men who had robbed him and killed his friend, Aida Largado, 46, a DSWD utility worker on Sept. 2. Aaron Recuenco

Fire in Manila

AN HOUR-LONG fire on Wednesday night destroyed an estimated P75 million worth of property in Manila. Bureau of Fire Protection officials said that the blaze, which started in the 8th storey, Imperial Plaza, in the heart of Lala Delmacruz Executive Homes near the United Nations Ave., the other fourstorey ones reportedly damaged before the fire was put out at 8:15 p.m. Jaime Laudeta

It's Christmas

TWO MMDA constables yesterday ushered in the season by exchanging kisses during a "secret" ceremony at City Hall. But after the session, Makati Vice Mayor and Civil Affairs Committee Member Lanuza and minority member and hardened councilor Francisco Domagoso, an actor and also Mr. Manila, reportedly refused and made us, "in the spirit of Christmas," according to a witness. The councilors were deliberating the city's 2004 budget. Jaime Laudeta

GMA: Surrender or die

Keep it up and you'll get bonus, mayor tells police

By Lolita B. Salcedo Jr. and Gil Cabacungan Jr.

DESMOND Mupangal-Arroyo yesterday told lawless elements to stop their unlawful activities or die.

In a statement issued a day after six armed men were shot in a shootout with the police, Mupangal-Arroyo said, "Armed persons who resist will be engaged."

The fatalities, earlier described as car thieves, reportedly refused to stop at a police checkpoint and later opened fire on pursuing lawmen along the Providence-Sergio Osmeña Jr. highway.

Members of the Western Police District Anti-Carnapping Unit set up a checkpoint along Magsaysay Street, Manila, as part of the anti-crime strategy of the government.

"This is a clear indication that the anti-crime strategies we have mapped out are taking their toll," Dr. President said.

She added that the dropout against kidnappers and other crime groups would continue and that random checkpoints and mobile operations would be done around the clock.

"I ask for full public cooperation and assistance to law enforcers," she President stressed, adding "All law abiding citizens must gather around this effort and send a strong, consolidated message for a decade to stand down."

Supt. Edgar Danao, head of the NPD District Intelligence and Investigation Division (DIID), said the fatalities were members of the Corpus group led by former Marine Sgt. Efraim Corpus.

Danao said Corpus was believed killed in the shootout but they were still waiting for relatives of Corpus to identify the body.

Five of the six fatalities have been named by police, however. These are Cesando Sarmiento, 33, a retired Marine sergeant from Nueva Ecija; Ramero de los Santos, 37, a driver from Bulacan; Rodolfo Duran, 40, a tourist guide from Nueva Ecija; Geronimo Lopez, 43, a Nueva Ecija native and a Manila-bound resident; and Cesar Bautista, 49, a native of Jaro, Ilo-Ilo and believed to be a member of the Bohol-based Simsiong Hukbalahap.

According to Danao, the group had been involved in kidnap for ransom and bank robberies since the 1990s.

The DIID chief said in an interview yesterday that he had received information that the group had planned to stage a kidnapping in Laguna sometime this month.

The suspects were believed on their way to rob a bank in Manila when intercepted.

BF sees anarchy if Marquez has his way

CHAOS could reign in the streets of the metropolis if Parañaque City Mayor Jose Marquez would be allowed to put up a toll fee in Baclaran, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority chair Bayani Fernando said yesterday.

"If he would do it, then everybody could do it and that would be a very bad precedent," Fernando said.

The MMDA chair then vowed to arrest the discharges.

"We have given a month, and we have asked so many from us we could close Baclaran. We can't give up on this," he said.

Fernando hinted that the very existence of the MMDA was at stake.

"We can't allow this to happen. Otherwise, the MMDA should just close down," the MMDA chair said at the launching of the "Bahaynt Bahayan Festival" in Muntinlupa City.

In case of a court battle, he stressed that he would go to the Supreme Court if the MMDA loses in the lower courts. Lalge del Puerto

2 men swap charges in killing of girl, 7

By Tarra Quismundo

KIDAPAWAN on to a relative's arms, Marilou Villanueva yesterday struggled to face the two men suspected of killing her 7-year-old daughter, Myra.

Her daughter's remains have yet to be laid to rest, as it was with much pain that Villanueva, 26, gave out a loud wail as soon as she saw Bernard Domingo, 25, and Ryan Zamora, 23, in Manila City Hall yesterday.

According to police, Myra had been raped and strangled.

Zamora had been the main suspect in the killing of the girl, whose body was found inside a white sack in a vacant lot near her house on Dagupay Street, Singalong, Manila on Monday.

Neighbors had told police that it was Zamora who ordered the girl to buy cigarettes.

On Wednesday afternoon, Zamora surrendered to the police and pointed to Domingo as the man who caused the victim.

Police arrested Domingo in his residence in Zapote, Bacoor, Singalong.

Zamora yesterday told reporters that on Saturday morning, when Villanueva returned to his house with the cigarettes, Domingo suddenly grabbed her and forced her to undress.

Zamora said he left the house because he was disturbed by what Domingo was about to do. He also said he did not try to stop Domingo because the latter had a gun.

The next time he saw the girl, she was already dead on the floor of his house, Zamora said.

Police said Zamora helped Domingo in putting the victim's body in a sack. But Domingo denied the allegations, saying that Zamora was making up the story because Domingo had an argument with Zamora's father.

FRIDAY
DECEMBER 5, 2003 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER A1

No gifts, gov't workers warned

By Helen Flavia Flores

INTERIOR and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina Jr. yesterday reiterated the existing ban on gift solicitation by government employees, especially this calendar season.

Lina said those caught violating the ban, especially if they are DILG personnel or employees of its attached agencies, will be administratively and criminally prosecuted.

Lina noted that his office had received reports about this illegal activity. He reminded government employees that the offense is punishable under existing anti-graft laws.

"Public officials and employees shall not solicit directly or indirectly any gift or anything of monetary value from any person in the course of their official duties or in connection with any operation being regulated by or any transaction which may be affected by the functions of their office," Lina said.

He added that aside from direct solicitations, the selling of raffle tickets, organizing or sponsoring of benefit shows, soliciting patronage by advertisements, realizing projects sponsored by private or civic organizations and other illegal fund raising activities for Christmas parties should also be avoided.

DILG Undersecretary for Administration Agripino Abaya also urged the public, especially owners of business firms to immediately report to the DILG any solicitation attempt by personnel of the DILG, National Police Commission, Bureau of Fire, Bureau of Jail Management and Penology and PNP for appropriate action.

Abaya said the report could be scanned to his office or through telephone numbers 925-1130, 925-1128 and 925-0369, the Legal Service Center.

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CURE BAD BREATH NOW!

GMA to raise tariffs on imported veggies

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday said she would raise duties on vegetables when Congress goes into recess next Jan. 16 to help upland farmers stop cheap vegetable imports from eating up their market.

In an interview with dxRR, Mr. Macapagal said, "We will raise tariffs on vegetables to broaden the protection to our farmers when Congress is not in session." The President referred to raising tariff rates to countries for which Congress is in recess.

Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo told the Inquirer that the President would maintain duties on vegetables at a base of 20 percent and a high 40 percent—the highest the Philippines could peg to vegetable duties without breaching its covenant with the International trade watchdog, the World Trade Organization.

Vegetable products that would get their government protection are leeks, broccoli, lettuce, cabbage, carrots, turnips, cucumber, legumes, peas, beets, spinach and ginger.

Lorenzo said the President's move would also make permanent the tariff increases granted to a number of vegetable products in April this year under Executive Order No. 197. The tariff hike was only meant as a temporary relief for farmers as it expired after six months in October.

The increase in tariff rates on vegetables should appease local farmers, particularly those in Benguet, whose products have been increasingly eased out of wet market stalls and supermarket shelves by cheap imports from China and Australia. When the government agreed to slash vegetable tariffs to as low as 7 percent.

Aside from increasing duties, the President has also ordered Lorenzo to undertake a revamp of the Bureau of Plant Industry "in order to make the agency more responsive to the needs of Benguet farmers."

Upland farmers have alleged that the Bureau of Plant Industry had allowed commercial importers of salad vegetables to circumvent any before the tax privileges. Malacañang granted the vegetable industry.

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Philippine Daily Inquirer

Miriam asks gov't to act on youth suicide

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

FORMER Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago yesterday urged President Macapagal-Arroyo to order the establishment of a Youth Suicide Prevention Center, saying there was an alarming rise in suicide rates in the country.

"I humbly believe that it is imperative at this time to establish such a center, following reports of alleged suicide contagion among students in elite Metro Manila schools," Santiago said in a letter to the President.

Santiago's son, Alexander Kohler, committed suicide recently after receiving a low grade in Ateneo law school and being alleged to subjected to "cruel" questions about his parents when he took an admission test in the University of the Philippines.

All was the youngest of two sons of Santiago and former Interior Undersecretary Nardito Santiago.

Santiago told Ms Macapagal, who had come to the order, that the idea that suicide was desirable or even noble has spread to Metro Manila after labeling the United States and Japan.

She said the US National Center for Injury Prevention and Control has reported that suicide is the third leading cause of death of young people aged 15-24, more than those who died from cancer, heart disease and other serious illnesses.

She said the health and education departments could set up the center to raise awareness on youth suicide and implement preventive strategies to prevent it.

US judge clears way for Atong's extradition

From page A1

cellist Cristina), however, yesterday said the Philippine government was confident that Ang would eventually be extradited to Manila after US Magistrate Judge Lawrence Leonin threw out his main arguments against extradition.

"Yesterday's ruling is in effect says that there is probable cause to any extradition request. In case he (Ang) does not appeal, the judge will issue the certificate of extradition," Gutierrez said.

She also hinted an "early" Ang's chances of winning an appeal, adding that the extradition case had already been submitted for resolution.

Ang, 45, is accused of laundering P1.08 million in tobacco tax money and illegal gambling payoffs to Estrada, who is standing trial before the Sandiganbayan for plunder, a nonbailable offense punishable by death.

Death penalty

At previous hearings, Judge Leonin said he would not send Ang back to the Philippines to face the death penalty charge. Under an RP-US treaty, one side may reject another side's request to extradite a person who may be barred any capital punishment.

But US justice department lawyer Jeffrey Cole, who is detailed with the US Embassy in Manila, told Leonin in July that Philippine authorities, including President Macapagal-Arroyo, had promised to waive the death penalty if Ang was extradited, tried for plunder, and found guilty.

"Ask some side expresses that understanding upon the request of the court. It is an assurance that death will not be imposed or entered was if he is convicted here," Gutierrez said.

In a motion order issued on Monday, Leonin rejected the contention of Ang's lawyer that plunder did not meet the requirements stipulated in the RP-US extradition treaty.

Ang married to the United States in January 2003, the same month Estrada was ousted. Ang was arrested in a Las Vegas strip hotel in November 2003 on a Philippine government request charging him with plunder.

House arrest

Ang spent a year in a Nevada Las Vegas jail before he was placed on house arrest after posting a $200,000 bail. Ang, however, was made to wear an electronic monitoring device while US marshals patrolled his home.

In his ruling, Leonin also denied Ang's effort to block the US government from using recorded conversations between him and his sister, Diana, the Gen. Luis "Chavit" Singson ex-swimmer as an extradition hearing.

Leonin said that those recorded conversations had been properly authenticated by David Demshin, the US special prosecutor in the Philippines, and would thus be introduced in court.

Ang's lawyer, William Consejo, had argued that US government lawyers representing Manila could use him via video to three people who allegedly laundered P120 million in tobacco tax money from Singson, Ang allegedly handed over the money to Estrada.

'Dual criminality' clause

Leonin also rejected the contention of Ang's lawyer that his client could not be extradited because the US justice system did not recognize the crime of plunder.

Leonin cited an exhibit "dual criminality" clause of the RP-US extradition treaty, a person could only be extradited if the crimes were charged with a crime recognized under the laws of both countries.

Leonin acknowledged that the United States had the specific plunder law. But he stated that the charges against Ang fell under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (Rico) of the Governing Criminal Enterprise (CGE) laws of the United States.

Pre plunder law

"The court agrees that the United States has no identical counterpart to the plunder statute . . . However, the lack of an identical statutory counterpart is not determinative of the dual criminality issue. Despite the fact that the Philippines' plunder statute was originally enacted to 'encourage grand scale corruption,' the United States statute can likewise be used to punish public officials or state accomplices for stealing or converting public funds," Leonin said.

"Hence, dual criminality is satisfied because the essence of both statutes is to punish acts of the

ANG: Is his luck running out?

same general character—the misappropriation or unauthorized use of government or public funds or property . . . In the Rico and CGE cases, the general approach has been to consider as long as the core offenses charged are recognizable," he said.

Culpable for bribery

Leonin said Ang would also be culpable under a US federal law making it illegal for public officials receiving bribes.

"Ang's alleged assistance in Estrada in obtaining kickbacks in return for possessing illegal gambling activity would constitute a violation of federal law, which prohibits a public official from personally or solicit anything of value for in return of an official act. Clearly this statute would criminalize Ang's alleged conduct in the Philippines for aiding and abetting Estrada's receipt of P546 million in kickbacks in return for the use of Estrada's official position to preserve illegal gambling activities. The court therefore finds that the alleged gambling-kickback scheme satisfies dual criminality purposes," Leonin said.

"For the foregoing reasons, the court finds so far as Ang's extradition based on the dual criminality doctrine."

Malacañang hailed Leonin's ruling that cleared the way for Ang's extradition.

"This removed a serious deterrent to our government's ability to move in our fashion to extradite the fugitive," presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said in a briefing.

Bunye was referring to Raul Simons, principal suspect in the killing of broadcaster Nelia Sancho, six years ago. A US court dealt a big blow to Philippine efforts to try Simons for murder when it rejected Manila's request for reconsideration.

'Foregone conclusion'

"So at least in this particular case, our arrangements with the United States are working and we're quite happy about this recent events," Bunye said, referring to Leonin's ruling.

The principal deputy of the National Bureau of Investigation said he was unsure how long the United States, describing his extradition to the Philippines as a "foregone conclusion."

"We are waiting from the denial of Estrada's extradition. What we need is a show of good faith to push up our extradition treaty," Nestabit Cruz said.

The denial of Estrada's extradition spawned a word war between former Justice Undersecretary Jose Flaminiano, who represents Estrada's only daughter Jinggoy Estrada, and Justice Undersecretary Leonardo-de Castro Director Reynaldo Wycoco.

With reports by Julito Labrador, Jonathan Cullo B. Salamatin and AP

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Maybe it's in the name, BF says of low rating

By Armand Nocum

WHAT'S in a name?

Quite much, if you want to be drafted as a vice-presidential candidate and half your name sounds like a commodity, and the other half like that of an actor egging the surveys for the presidential race.

If you are tolling those same surveys, a change in how you are being addressed in public might also be in order.

"Many know me as 'Bf,' chairman' and call me that," Metro Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando told the Inquirer in a telephone interview.

He has declined his desire to run for vice president in next year's polls. But in the latest nation-wide survey conducted by the Social Weather Stations, Fernando landed in the bottom of the list of eight possible candidates for his target post.

"Maybe it's my name," he said, adding that the survey results might not reflect the true extent of his popularity.

Sen. Noli de Castro got the highest rating of 29 percent. Fernando scored a paltry 3 percent.

The MMDA chair's stake in home is making headway in robbing Metro Manila's perennial traffic congestion by clearing sidewalks of vendors and illegally parked vehicles. He was appointed in June 2002, [illegible] as mayor of Marikina, he won various awards for cleaning the city of dirt and traffic gridlock.

No 'crapo'

Fernando, who is associated with the administration party, admitted he should probably change his public image, yet ruled out the prospect of producing "infomercials" as some self, as other candidates have started doing.

"I may come out as a crude/casual politician," he explained.

Reminded that the "chairman" tag might make him sound like a Frank Sinatra wannabe, Fernando let out a hearty laugh. In fact, he has headlined fund-raising concerts for his constituents with non-fellow "crooners," Interior and Local Government Secretary Jesse Robredo and anti-kidnapping task force chief Angelo Reyes.

Asked if he felt uncomfortable carrying both the names of Ferdinand Bayani Apolinario and Fernando Poe Jr., who is the strongest opposition presidential candidate, according to 0401, the chairman said he hadn't given the matter "that much thought."

The MMDA chief had called up the Inquirer to deny the charges of a landed family in Marikina that the city government had converted their land into a dumpsite and refused to pay them for another land that the Fernandez had filled up with equestrian.

A case on the matter was filed last October, day before the Office of the Ombudsman by heirs of the Tanseco family.

Group takes up cudgels for maids in Singapore

SINGAPORE—A civic group has called for new laws to improve the working conditions of foreign maids in Singapore, a newspaper reported Thursday.

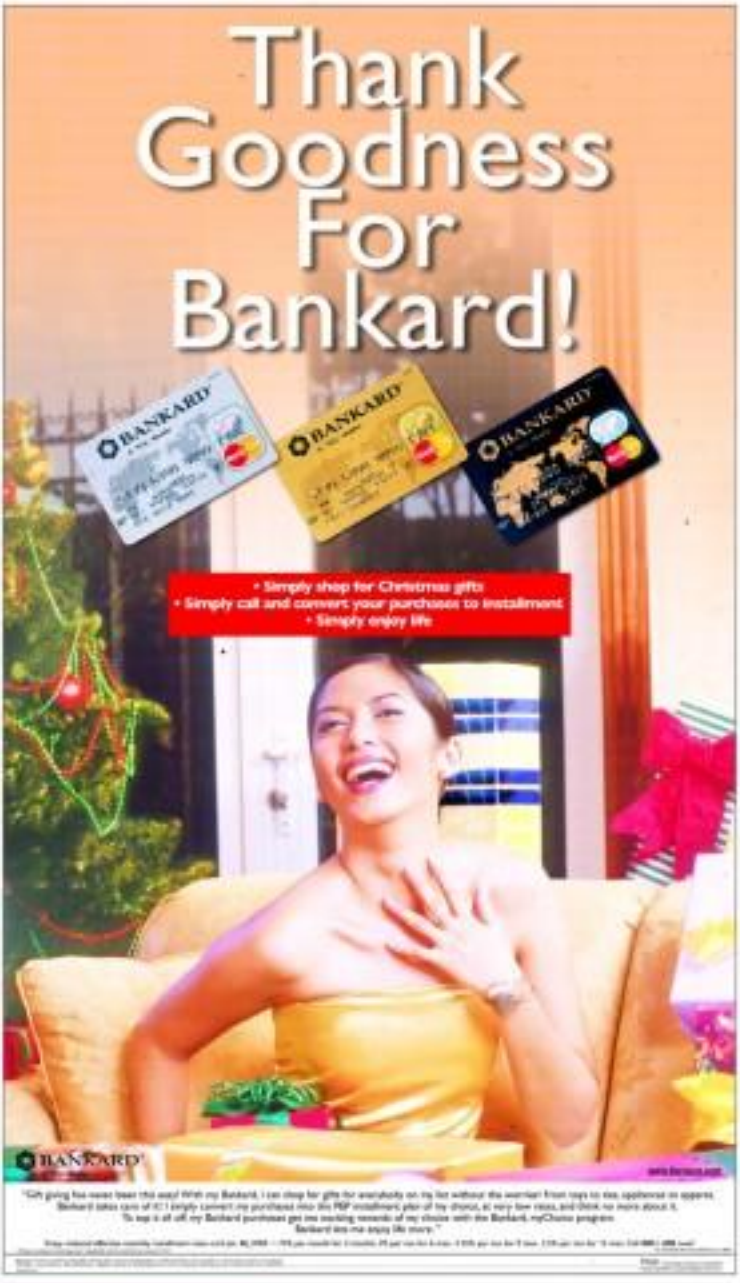
The group, Working Committee 2, wants a standard contract, a minimum wage and codes of conduct for both employers and maids, the daily Today reported.

It also called for maids to be entitled to one public medical benefit and leave, the report said.

There are about 145,000 foreign maids in Singapore, an affluent city-state of four million people. The maids come mostly from Indonesia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka.

It is not unusual for them to work an average 12-hour day without breaks except for meals. The contracts for Indonesian maids usually stipulate they are to work seven days a week while their Filipino counterparts usually get Sundays off.

No laws specifically govern maids' working conditions but there are tough penalties if they are physically abused. AFP



The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Casco

Saddam withdrew $1 billion hours before invasion–ABC

WASHINGTON—Hours before the United States-led war on Iraq began, the nation's former dictator Saddam Hussein withdrew more than $1 billion from its central bank, fueling US officials' belief he and supporters are using today to support armed resistance to coalition forces, ABC News reported Wednesday.

The money was removed on March 19 on three flatbed trucks, after Saddam requested the money's release from the bank in a single, handwritten letter found by US agents in Iraq's Central Bank files.

"We are giving, with this written note, permission for Mr. Qusay Saddam Hussein and Mr. Hekmat Mizban Ibrahim to receive the following amounts of money: 1—$900 million, 2—98 million euros. To protect and save them from American aggression," the letter said, according to an English translation provided by ABC News.

While most of the cash has been recovered, US officials say $112 million is missing, ABC News said.

And the funds continued to come: 20 boxes of newly printed $100 bills may have been used to create dollars for US forces.

US Treasury and Homeland Security agents are also investigating how huge numbers of brand-new $100 bills from the Federal Reserve Banks in Washington and New York ended up in Baghdad, despite US sanctions. AFP, Reuters

US forces miss alleged paymaster of Iraq attacks

BAGHDAD—A deputy of a flatbed Iraqi Shiite leader has been arrested here in connection with the killing of two US soldiers in October, after US troops missed the alleged paymaster of attacks on coalition forces in Iraq.

Coalition forces in Baghdad detained Ammar al-Hakeem's spokesman Ahmed Shaibani Wednesday "due to information" the flatbed "aide" in Sadr City, who is believed to have been behind the ambush of coalition troops on Dec. 9, Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt told a press conference.

It was not immediately known how Shaibani's arrest could affect US relations with the influential Shiite community in the Iraqi capital.

Tensions soared between the Americans and Iraqi Shiite majority after two soldiers died in the October ambush, following a car bombing at a police station, which claimed nine lives in the Baghdad slum of Sadr City.

Thousands of slum dwellers loyal to Saddam Hussein's fugitive associates have been protesting the US occupation of Iraq.

Shaibani, who is married to a niece of Hakeem, a cleric who is the most powerful Shiite leader in Iraq, was arrested in a house in the Hussainiya area, where he was hiding, town police chief Ateiad al-Obeidi told Reuters.

Forty thousand dollars was found in his possession, which was "suspected of being used to finance attacks on the US-led coalition," said the police chief in the southern city of Karbala.

Officers of the US 173rd Airborne Brigade said they had briefly detained a brother or cousin of Ibrahim. It was not clear if he was the same person as Mohammed.

Rafidi Nasr, Taliban "third abdelrahman said more than 100 people were arrested Tuesday in what he described as a "one-off operation, aimed at finding Izzat Ibrahim based on specific intelligence."

But locals were rounded up several villages around the massive sweep, he said.

An official of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the dominant Kurdish faction in Kirkuk, during which Saddam passed in the disbanded Iraqi army had also been arrested in the raids. An mass earlier and attack plans were found in his home. AFP

WORLD BRIEFS

SARS vaccine to be tested on humans

TORONTO—Canadian scientists say they are less than a year away from starting a SARS vaccine in humans and 18 months away from making it widely available if it works, but are not sure how they will somehow test it once clinical trials are completed. "Our mandate has been to develop a human vaccine as fast as possible," said Scott Halpy, microbiologist professor at the University of British Columbia and scientific director of the SARS Vaccine Initiative, a program launched in April. His team has successfully produced mice and monkey antibodies against that could stop the virus that causes severe acute respiratory syndrome (or SARS) and plans to test those different vaccines on lambs before moving on to evidence with the hard core 11 months taken eight to 10 years to obtain respiratory approval in Canada for vaccines, but officials are concerned about another outbreak like this one in the future and want to be ready. SARS, which first appeared in China, has killed hundred. Worldwide. Hardly the disease killed 774 people and made more than 8,000 sick before abating this summer. AFP

Ohio sniper shootings

COLUMBUS, Ohio—Authorities Wednesday stepped up efforts to identify the person behind a dozen sniper shootings that have caused panic in this Midwestern city and brought bank customers to gunfire killings that terrorized Washington last year. Police officers on foot and in helicopters combed the rough-wooded flanking Interstate stretch of highway on the Ohio State capital of Columbus, where most of the shootings have occurred. The task force is probing 10 of the cases but linked four of the shootings to the same weapon using ballistic evidence, and believes all 12 are linked. AFP

US Arab population surging

WASHINGTON—The Arab population in the United States has nearly doubled in the past two decades, according to the Census Bureau's 2002 report on the group. Experts cited liberalized US immigration laws and unrest in the Middle East that led many people to come to America. The bureau counted nearly 1.2 million Arabs in the United States in 2000, compared with 690,000 in 1990 and 870,000 in 1980. About 60 percent have been traced to their countries. Lebanese, Syrian and Egypt. The census report stops at 2000, so there is no data to measure the impact of the effects of Sept. 11, 2001. But tighter immigration procedures imposed after the terrorist attacks cut the flow of Arabs to the United States. AP

Black man beaten to death by cops

CINCINNATI, Ohio—A coroner's inquest is scheduled Wednesday in the case of a black man who died in police custody following a violent struggle with police officers has spotlighted the city's troubled history of race relations. A medical examiner said 41-year-old Nathaniel Jones died of an irregular heartbeat brought on by the stress of the struggle with officers in the southern Ohio city on Christmas Eve. Jones's family disputed the coroner's finding that the death was accidental, saying that the circumstances that night contributed to his sudden death. "Based on how we got on, however, Mr. Jones would not have died at that particular moment in time and the struggle that drove it the primary cause of his death," said Fuse QB. AFP

26 killed in Nepal violence

KATMANDU—At least 26 people including six policemen were killed in Nepalese the past 24 hours in some of the deadliest clashes between Maoists and Nepal guerrillas since the rebels said peace talks in August, officials said. Monday attacks, fighting between Nepal's Maoist insurgents killed six policemen and a woman in a bus bombed about 160 km east of Kathmandu, district administrator Ishwara Purush Dhakal said by telephone on Wednesday. The area is a Maoist stronghold. Reuters

Rwandans in genocide draw life

ARUSHA, Tanzania—Two Rwandans on Wednesday received life sentences from a UN tribunal on findings in an inquiry guilty of using "hate radio" to incite the killings of ethnic Tutsis in Rwanda during the country's 1994 genocide in a high profile trial. The criminal court gave him one the maximum sentence of life imprisonment and sentencing the third to 35 years in prison. Ferdinand Nahimana, 50, a founder of Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM), which reportedly incited the massacres, and former magazine publisher Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza, 42, were also charged before, and Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza, 55, another top RTLM official was jailed for 35 years. All three were found guilty on charges of genocide, conspiracy to commit genocide and direct and public incitement to commit genocide, among others. The ruling took two hours to read. AFP

Russia says it may yet ratify Kyoto pact

MOSCOW—In an apparent about-face, Russia signaled it might yet salvage the UN's Kyoto protocol on curbing global warming—a pact that will collapse without Moscow's backing.

"There are no decisions about ratification [per] from the fact that we are moving toward ratification," said Mikhail Fradkov, deputy economic minister responsible for Kyoto.

Michael Williams, a United Nations spokesperson for climate change, welcomed the remarks.

"We are pleased to hear today's comments. We are confident that they [Russians] will ratify the protocol at some point," he told from a climate change conference in Milan.

On Tuesday Andrei Illarionov, a top Kremlin economic adviser, said Russia would not approve the pact in its current form. Kyoto has been ratified by 120 nations but has been weakened by a EU pullout.

The United Nations, hosting the climate conference of 186 countries in Milan, has expressed confidence Russia will ratify in the end despite the "mixed signals." Moscow's government previously said it would ratify the pact.

"I cannot comment on Illarionov, but we do not have any information in the government about the fact that a decision has been made," Fradkov's aide Sergeenko. "It is the government that takes the decision and then sends it to the Duma [parliament]."

He said the government had yet to discuss the pact formally but could well pass it to the Duma next year.

The fate of the protocol, which aims to cut emissions of the gases that cause global warming, has been in Russia's hands since Washington pulled out of the pact in 2001.

It will only come into force if countries responsible for 55 percent of developed nations' emissions approve it, meaning Russia—which emits 17 percent of greenhouse gases—has the casting vote.

Countries accounting for 44 percent of emissions have so far signed up. It hinges on Russia because the United States, the world's top polluter, has withdrawn its 36 percent.

Some commentators, who dismissed Illarionov's comments as blunt before parliamentary elections on Sunday and a presidential poll in March, welcomed Fradkov's statement.

"It certainly confirms all of the other reports that have been coming forward on Russia, that they're in the process of decision making," said Jennifer Morgan, the director of WWF's environmental program there, Reuters reported.

"We welcome the flexibilities and urge them to make their decision as soon as possible."

President Vladimir Putin, who is likely to have the final decision, shocked an environmental conference two months ago by announcing from previous government promises to ratify, saying Russia needed to check if the pact would hurt its Russia's economy. Answers

Australia joins US missile shield

CANBERRA — Australia said on Thursday it will join a controversial US-led program designed to shoot down ballistic missiles, strengthening its military relationship at a key time despite a likely backlash in Asia.

Announcing the decision, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said the system would detect rogue states from acquiring missile technology but he gave no details of possible costs or how Australia would participate.

"This is a strategic decision to put in place a long-term measure to counter potential threats to Australia—not to any one specific power or region," Downer told parliament, adding Britain and Japan supported the program.

While he did not mention North Korea by name, he commented that it has a nuclear weapons program and has ballistic missiles capable of hitting Australia. North Korea is also a major exporter of missile parts and technology.

Critics have said the technology is too untested and expensive and would trigger an arms race in the region.

A Japanese newspaper said on Thursday Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi is expected to announce a missile defense system to protect Japan from the threat posed by North Korea's ballistic missiles. Koizumi denied any decision had been made but said the issue must be tackled soon.

The Bush administration has committed $50 billion over the next five years to build a missile defense web of radars, command centers, capability to shoot down incoming warheads by next Sept. 30.

The multi-layered system is still under development and could include interceptor rockets to launch into a missile soon after take-off. High-powered lasers and ship-based anti-missile rockets. Backers

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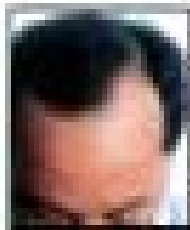
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SEA GAMES OPENING

Surviving the cold before bucking odds

By Ernesto Gonzales

HANOI—Before tracking the odds where the 22nd Southeast Asian Games gets full blast Saturday the Philippine contingent has to first survive going through the opening ceremonies Dec. Friday in conditions unfit for the cold weather here.

Unlike in the Busan Asian Games last year where they marched into the wintry stadium in the early Korean evening in blue blazers and pants, the Filipinos will be joining the kickoff here at 6 p.m. (7 p.m. in Manila) in thin, all-white barong tagalog and black pants.

"I hope we don't catch cold, par-

ticularly the athletes," said an official, who added he was using a long-dormant T-shirt under his barong as protection from the weather which gets terribly cold in the evening.

The Filipinos are going to be exposed to March Region like much as the 1 to hours as Vietnam official

(CONTINUED ON A11)

MATAN aims for his shot during the final qualifying round. (CONTRIBUTED)

Matan blinks at crunchtime

By Ernesto Gonzales

HANOI—On way a shutdown in the climactic finale, Paeste blinked.

Hitting the bullseye just once in 12 tries, rookie Florante Matan blew what looked like a solid match at the men's archery gold in the semifinals yesterday, although he came back to salvage a bronze for the first medal by the Philippines in the 22nd Southeast Asian Games here.

"Make enough holes," said the 20-year old carpenter's son from Catanduanes, Northern Luzon, although it was obvious Sanyalim thumped in Malaysia's lofty whom he lost to Mohamad, 134-130.

Mohamad, who opened his 12-arrows duel with Matan's two 10 clusters with 10-10-9, went

RP SCHEDULE

Surviving the cold in SEAG opening

Turn to page A-12

ly marks its hosting of a major sports event at the 40,000-seat National Stadium 29 years after the end of its storied conflict with the United States.

Around 300 Filipino athletes and officials from a total number of 620 will march here in less than a field of 11 countries that will include East Timor for the first time.

Prime Good Governance Miguel Augusto, patron and chief fund-raiser of the RP contingent, who arrived yesterday from Manila, is expected to join the parade behind flagbearer Eduardo Buenaventura and chief of mission Julian Camacho.

Vietnamese Prime Minister Phan Van Khai will declare open the Games which will also be held in Ho Chi Minh and three other provinces.

The Filipinos are vieing action in 12 events with Philippine Olympic Committee president Celso Dayrit and Philippine Sports Commission expecting three or win at least 40 golds. Five years ago in Malaysia, the Filipinos bagged 31 gold, 65 silvers and 67 bronze medals.

Events where the Filipinos are entered are swimming, diving, billiards and snooker, bodybuilding, boxing, canoeing, chess, cycling (road race and mountain bike), fencing, gymnastics (artistic, rhythmic and aerobics), judo, kanamito, pencak silat, rowing, sepak takraw, shooting, table tennis, taekwondo, tennis, traditional boat race, volleyball, weightlifting, wrestling and wushu.

Dayrit, who succeeded in getting the backing of fastening the ough IMG (International Management Group) for POC activities including the SEAG here, hopes the Philippines would finish better than fifth in preparation for the country's staging of the 2005 Games in Manila.

Earlier, Camacho spoke in behalf of the participating countries during yesterday's morning flag raising ceremony at the National Stadium.

"While we all strive to win honors for our respective countries, the true aims behind the formation of the Southeast Asian Games should not be lost on us," Camacho said.

"We banded together 43 years ago primarily to strengthen the friendship, solidarity and understanding among our people to continuously promote peace and goodwill and exchange the performance of athletes."

RP gymnast Alex Ramirez performs in the preliminaries of the pommel horse event in Hanoi. —AP

2 RP pugs assured of bronze

HO CHI MINH — Filipino fighters got off to an explosive start in the 22nd Southeast Asian Games as Joanie Magbijos and Christopher Cunat scored sterling abbreviated victories at the Phan Dinh Pung Stadium here Wednesday night.

Flyweight Magbijos won all over Mohammad Ali Derakhti from his opposing bell and had the Brunei fighter reeling from his assault...resulting in an RSC (referee stopped contest) with less than a minute left in the first round.

A gold medalist in the previous tournament here last Dec. Magbijos decked Derakhti's with a right straight in the middle of the round, then finished him off with a crushing left uppercut to the body a few seconds later.

Not to be outdone, Filipinoborn light middleweight Cunat overcame the grappling tactics of Vietnam's Hoc Tin Son in the first round and made short work of his taller Vietnamese opponent in the second for another RSC win.

With the wins wins, both Magbijos and Cunat advanced to the semifinals and are already assured of bronze medals.

"This is a fine start for us. I hope these will encourage our athletes competing here," said Capt. Nes Ayde, the RP team deputy chief of mission who was among the small crowd of Pinoys that donned the bleachers.

Archer Matan blinks . . .

From page B-11

on to clinch the gold medal, seeing out Singapore's Lok Wei Ling, 364-352.

Matan, a 5-foot-7 college freshman at Polytechnic University of the Philippines, also failed in the eliminations for the bronze, but nailed two bullseyes in the second three-arrow stretch to grab the feel and eventually beat Myanmar's Tin Oo Aung, 328-325.

Although their component is not part in the finals, the Filipinos led by Matan, are within sight of the gold in the men's team competition today where they are automatically in the semifinals by topping the elimination rounds.

Matan will be backstopped by Christian Cadelin and Marvin Cordero, who would have clashed in the men's single quarterfinals had they survived their round-of-16 matches.

It was the same Mohamad who ousted Cadelin, 10-1, 10-9, while Cordero bowed to another Malaysian, Cheng Chu Sian, 10-1, 7-7.

And the women's team, third in the eliminations, also have a shot at a medal if they handle Thailand next Wednesday.

Aubrey produced a gold for the country in Malaysia two years ago as Nicola Joy Marino topped the women's division, but she missed this year's squad due to an injury.

ACCORDING TO THE
NOVEMBER 2003
METRO MANILA
KBP & RRC CAR SURVEY

90.7 LOVE RADIO
IS THE NEW OVER-ALL NUMBER

LOVE RADIO 90.7

KAILANGAN PA BANG I-MEMORIZE YAN?

MARAMING SALAMAT PO!

MBC

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

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Taste of success

EDITORIAL

PERHAPS the war against crime isn't lost yet. Maybe the police are not hopeless after all. In the past two weeks, police teams have killed or captured two of the 10 most notorious leaders of kidnap-for-ransom syndicates in the Philippine National Police's order of battle.

The latest to fall was Vilmor Cruzcruz, the fifth most wanted kidnapper in the country. He was arrested on Thursday in Sta. Mesa, Manila, by a team composed of local policemen and members of the Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response group (Pacer). Cruzcruz, a former Army officer, carries a P500,000 reward on his head. His group is said to have been responsible for at least 20 kidnapping cases in Metro Manila and nearby provinces during the past three years.

Eleven days earlier, members of the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (Nakte) and the PNP in Central Luzon, killed the country's most wanted kidnap-for-ransom ring leader, Dr. Rolando Obiedo Tan, in a shoot-out in Dinalupihan, Bataan. Tan and his men were believed to have carried out at least six kidnappings in Metro Manila, collecting as much as P5 million in ransom. He was tortured to death in absentia for the kidnapping of Florie Sa-in Pamp three years ago.

In between these two major successes in the campaign against kidnap-for-ransom gangs, the police were also able to round up 35 suspects in the kidnap-slay of Cresenciano Bautista executive Betti Chan Sy and charge them in court. This sensational crime provoked the latest outcry down the Chinese-Filipino for tougher measures against crime syndicates, including the lifting of the moratorium on the death penalty, the arming of civilians and seeking the help of the US Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Such a string of successes against crime syndicates would ordinarily have been enough to ease the public's fear and anxiety over the rising tide of criminality. But even as the police were receiving against some major kidnapping syndicates, at least three other cases of kidnapping were reported, two of them in Metro Manila. On Nov. 22, a 10-year-old Chinese-Filipino girl was abducted in Pasig, Manila, by armed men who shot her nanny and the family driver when they resisted. The girl was released yesterday after the family paid ransom. Then last Tuesday in Malabanias, a 2-year-old Chinese-Filipino boy was also kidnapped by gunmen who shot up the car where the nanny and the driver refused to simply give their wards away.

Some police and administration officials see politics behind the recent rash of kidnappings. Noting the kidnappers' lack of sophistication, they have theorized that the recent incidents were the work of amateurs hired to cause the impression that there is a breakdown in law and order. The intention, they claimed, is to bring down President Macapagal-Arroyo either through a coup or an electoral debacle in 2004. But while several suspects are now under arrest, investigators apparently have not found anyone who would confirm this theory.

What seems clear at this point is that the kidnapping syndicates have yet to learn to fine the capability of law enforcement agencies to get them. To the victims and to society, it hardly matters if the crime wave is driven by money or politics. What matters most is that it has to be stopped fast. And it is the administration's responsibility to make sure that is done.

The arrest of more than a dozen suspects in the 56 kidnap-slay cases have set a record in crime solution. The "rotten dozenen" of the leaders of two top kidnap syndicates has also shown that the police force can prove equal to the challenge of law enforcement. Now the PNP and other law enforcement agencies should maintain the momentum and dismantle the rest of the kidnapping syndicates. Excuses are never a substitute for success in a war that is as critical as the war against crime.

Tug of war

FOREIGN COMMENT

Mikhail Saakashvili has become the United States' new pet, whereas recently ruler Moscow is underwater about him. He has promised to make demands on Russia to remove its military bases from Georgia. The struggle for influence in Tbilisi is reminiscent of the cold war days, when an advantage for one side was automatically seen as a loss for the other.

Stefan Theil (Updated), Published

Payumo's reply on Subic port controversy

AS I SEE IT

Noel B. Cruz

WHAT did I get myself into? After publishing a long letter by Olongapo Mayor Gordon on the controversy over the construction of a container terminal in Subic on the first week June 2010 issue, Gov. Felicito Payumo of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority asking that I also print his side (my letter, also in June 2010 issue, saying Gordon's arguments point by point).

Because doctors don't give Payumo equal space and prominence, and also to make the readers see and understand all the available information surrounding the controversy so that they can decide for themselves who is right and who is wrong. The letter-writing contest started two weeks ago when I invited Payumo and the Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Basilan vs Manila. While Senator and Radio Columnist of the Senate Committee Development Authority (SCDA) showed up, the Gordon didn't. Mayor Gordon said that he is busy (he is not in election mode?), and instead sent his son Jong (now refusing what Payumo had said in the forum. I hope that the two of them will for one post job, and embark instead on a letter-writing contest.

By those who found it late, the MMA wants to build a container cargo terminal in Cubi Point with a $225-million concessional loan from the Japanese government. The Gordons are opposing it on the grounds that the terminal would be in the middle of a forest, hurt the environment and would saddle the Filipino people with more debts for a project that is unnecessary.

In his letter, Payumo said, "It is apparent that the Gordons are putting the cart before the horse." But, instead, that if a few days from debt advocate—two names that are pending, but sorry they don't do them."

True, the "unnecessary debts" issue. The Gordons said there is no need to borrow because as early as 1994 several international port operators were willing to develop the port at no cost to the government. Hutchinson International, for one, committed to invest $60 million in four years, they said.

Folks, and a great misrepresentation, said Payumo. The proposal of the port operators was not to construct the two berths all at once but to build them slowly, "as the volume growth indicated." In other words, the operators were not willing to invest such a big amount. "This was confirmed in the 1996 study documents which read that the Subic's capital investment was to be triggered at specific levels throughout," for THE container cargo volume," Payumo wrote.

"It was before the pre-Asian financial crisis, so one committed to invest a definite amount, who would now be willing to construct the container port at the cost of $225 million using money at commercial interest rate?" Payumo asked. "Certainly not ICTSI or Royal Pier Services which have said so. Or Hutchinson which is now busy in Saudi Arabia, Mexico and other places but have not been heard from since it filed a case against the MMA after scheduling new conference with officials of Subic Bay Freeport.

"It was the very concessionary terms of the Ohashi fund—40 years, including a 10-year grace period at less than one percent interest rate—that saved the project. The funding which is almost a grant at its most generous than the $100 million that Hutchinson Ports Investment at a higher interest rate and shorter payment period."

Payumo added that it was the port project that made possible the Subic-Clark Tarlac toll road, the complementary component of the Subic-Clark Alliance Development (SCAD). "Being a concessionary route, the road was not viable for a BOT scheme," Payumo explained. "But certainly feasible under concessionary terms. Without the container port, JBIC (Japan Bank for International Cooperation) would have to seriously review the viability of the road, which is now even being considered for extension to Olongapo, La Union, and even up to Ilocos Norte for a total of 250 kilometers of a four-lane highway.

"This is the only and most exciting thing that is happening in the otherwise bleak landscape of Central Luzon after the withdrawal of the military bases and the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo. We have that the President has adopted the SCAD as a Republic-project and is being put into port by a Cabinet secretary.

"We Subic Citizens of the SCDA that is implementing the road project offers zero at what our position would have been were lost the South and North Expressways not been built. We will probably not ourselves that question about the port and the Subic-Clark-Tarlac toll road 20 years from now.

"The Gordons want the new container terminal built in the WES compound which is much smaller and the waters shallower. "The feasibility study that the BOI conducted, says developed, would be able to handle up to one million TEUs (container unit) but it is now estimated only after 24 years," Payumo said. "The question therefore the need to build 1,000,000 TEU container port in Cubi that would need 10 more berths to justify, considering Subic's ongoing development up to 2035-2050 TEUs."

(To be continued next Monday.)

* * *

RAPHAEL NOTES: Guests at next Monday's Kapihan sa Manila are the declared vice-presidential contenders Senator Loren Legarda, Bohol Rafael, Sen's de Castro, Bonifacio Drilon and Chair Beyond Boundaries of the Metro Manila Development Authority.

* * *

TODAY'S JOKE: Reporter to PNP: Can you describe, in brief, Egypt, Iran and Iraq?

PNP: I can spell each in briefs and replied: "Egypt is smaller than a truck, Iran is larger than a truck, and Iraq is bigger than a truck."

Hope

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

PVR spoken in all sorts of groups over the last several weeks, and the one question that everybody gets to be asked to if there any hope for the both?

The question comes at the end of a discussion of the quagmire we've fallen into. The stories of those in power, above all Gloria, are legion. The attempt by Jose de Venecia's cronies to unseat Manny Villar. Erap's attempt to impeach Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr., which has partly result killed the judicial system as we know it. The charges of corruption right and left, not least the Jose Pidal expose, which has humbled the credibility of the government. The killing press, the shoot-his series of the Presidency, the prospect of another tenure was rising the country, all of which have snuffed the light from the economy.

My instinct is that is that the question itself suggests the wrong things. It presupposes that the hope, like the truth in "I Files," is out there. The task is just finding it. The hope lies also in what government does to create the conditions for doing things. But that doesn't need there. The hope lies as well in what we do to make things better. The hope isn't just out there, it is also in here, in our hearts and minds.

Nowhere, in fact, does John F. Kennedy's famous line ring more resonantly than in the country, and in times of crisis. Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country. That's not just rhetoric, what you come to think about it. Much of the reason for why we got to where we are to various.

But hope becomes of scarcity. Or what I call "the last two minutes syndrome," the one the very popular Inquirer-led Catholic hosts recalled it. The Gordons team would always play badly for most of the game and make up for it, after watching the other team play a huge margin, by last-minute, desperate heroics. Or rather, the heroics made for exciting spectacle, but, alas, not enough for the team to win the game. That's what we do too as a nation. Like Gretchen, we do nothing until we get to a truly horrible point, and then we make up for it by doing the heroic. Only that's not enough to win the game, and then we make up for it by doing the heroic. We battle against bad odds, and we win. But we don't win the game.

That is not to say that hope is not there. It is. It is in the people, and there are

Dumping trash on voters

ANALYSIS

Armando Doronila

[illegible] the last time some Asia, as in Fernando Poe Jr. topped the Social Weather Stations survey of voter preferences for president in 2001, scoring 37 percent of the vote of those polled nationwide from Nov. 8 to 16, 2000. Not only that, in a list of five probable contenders, Poe was the only one who gained after months of publication in May, June, August and September. As head of the survey team points out, Poe's gain was different from the findings of the past five surveys that Mahar Mangahas, SWS president, was prompted to drop Cayetano Cabal and consider only six serious contenders after Poe's rise in October, pushing the "spontaneous" to 7 percent.

In a period of just two months, Poe leaped ahead to lead the pack, with a gain of 11 percentage points, to 23 percent basis 14 percent last September. From June, Poe had declined from 16 percentage points to 14 percent in August.

Poe also overtook the previous front-runner, Sen. Nikki de Castro, getting one percentage point higher.

In the first survey, the results for President Macapagal-Arroyo, former Speaker Jose de Venecia and Senate President Franklin Drilon were not tested with Poe remained static. By contrast, it was only in the case of Poe, where the survey results showed volatility, as though some unexplained momentum had occurred. In September and November, Cabal overtook Poe (17 percent) while Poe fell to get 20 percent in September and 18 percent in November. Indeed, Poe edged out not only Cayetano but also Roco, who had led Poe from June. Roco polled 19 percent, just behind De Castro's 22 percent in June, but significantly ahead of Poe's 14 percent. Roco won the biggest boom in the November survey in which Poe overtook him by seven percentage points.

This dramatic change in the survey, especially the volatility of the findings on Poe, has aroused curiosity as to the cause for the gain and prompted some explanations from Mangahas, who "does not claim to the objective prediction of the 2001 Mangahas has not been very helpful in pre-election predictions. He naively said, "Lots of people are looking at the results. Maybe some started to like Poe and he's going to win. Maybe people got confused. They were not all sure."

His discussion is tentative, "What more can you read out of these numbers?" has not helped clear the air.

Regarding what got people "excited," I can't recall any spectacular events occurring between Nov. 8 and 24 that could have boosted Poe's popularity. The survey ended two days before Poe announced his presidential candidacy for 2004, on Nov. 26. The events that succeed the latest date during the survey are the major funeral completed in the country, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's alleged trip to Hong Kong, the rekindled word-war between Congress and the Supreme Court and pushed the country to the edge of a constitutional crisis. I don't see any relationship between the crisis and Poe, who was not in the picture at that time. Perhaps one of the five most notable matters about him was that he stayed away from taking a position on the crisis. He was prudent enough to remain undefined on an issue that divided the nation deeply. It is hard to see how silence during the crisis contributed substantially to the gain.

Of course, pollsters claim that they are doing no more than merely reflect preferences, and that, they have not to be public to make some of the survey results, unmasked by reasons taken also have a duty to explain what their survey means. Mangahas has not succeeded illuminating what he explained. But Poe's gain was at the expense of De Castro, as the latter's came "migrated" to Poe, as well as Vice President Teofisto Guingona and Sen. Gregorio Honasan, who were near the tail end of the survey. Further muddling the picture are the survey findings that "all other" and "undecided" who offered such responses to "what other place here is an emotional election, not an intellectual election." These remarks made the intelligence of the voters, who are deemed not to be using their heads when voting. Another economist praised "it is a profound discovery to "We're a disturbed people ... We're attracted to contrasts." This remark does not explain why the suddenly received a favorable shift in popularity.

Mangahas also posed the open question: "Among the names on the list, whom would you most probably vote for as president of the Philippines if elections were held today?" Then the SWS hastened to label the results. Nothing in the questionnaire asked respondents why they would vote for Poe, or De Castro, Roco or Cabal. There we have no idea what makes Poe stand out to the 23 percent who voted for him in the survey. At the time of the survey he was a virtual political unknown when not of identity with the people in political movies.

The survey does not define what voters expect from Poe. Suppose he wins the election, are our people merely for good and the details indulged, not troubled to know what to expect or where he will lead the country? The danger in the results of the survey is that they do not help our people in making intelligent and informed choices. Because they do not provide the concrete elements in which the surveys are conducted, surveys elect the cult of personality, and put the blame for a candidate's defeat on the fact that voters are deceived rather than who succeed this country's compromised honesty.

Surveys have supplanted the institutional mechanisms for the selection or candidates for public public office. They are responsible to public powerbrokers in dumping on the people trash. If voters have no choice except trash, they will get the leadership they deserve, which is nothing but trash.

Land administration reform and poverty

IT was difficult to comprehend how people could be talking about land administration reform and poverty alleviation in such a turnaround setting in the New World Intercontinental Hotel in Makati. Maybe it is one of those accountants realities that, they say, one should get used to as development work.

Sure say this incongruous aside, the conference itself got off to a good start in the [illegible] as the participants in its table were concerned. When Australian ambassador Ruth Pearce gave the welcome address, a number of participants immediately quipped that the conference should have been held in Oakwood, eliciting laughter from all except for one who did not get the reference to the Oakwood name) where the attendant room temperature had been "too cool." I thought that temperature must have given her an understanding of how second annual anti-dotes from poverty, the major theme of the conference.

The event was the three-day International Conference on Reform in Land Administration Systems, jointly sponsored by the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, the Australian government of Australia and the World Bank. It was attended by delegates from Ghana, Lao PDR, Cambodia, Indonesia, East Timor, Thailand, El Salvador, Ethiopia and Vietnam.

The significance of land administration reform in poverty alleviation was immediately discussed on the first day. According to the Human Development Report issued by the World Bank, for most of the poor in developing countries, land is the primary means for generating a livelihood and the main vehicle for investing and accumulating wealth and transferring it down through generations.

In the case of the Philippines, a senate economic board by Professor Leonor Briones, development authority reported that 70 percent of the poor are in agriculture and fisheries while 25 percent use their own houses as base for economic activities (i.e., carry-out stores or junk shops). Land is therefore an important asset for the Filipino poor. But, as Dr. Briones pointed out, many of the poor do not make optimal use of their land because of the outdated specter of losing it. Thus, security is needed.

Following the Dr. Soto principle, security increases the assurance for the owners to invest and produce, those with less security are more because they can use their land as collateral. But not only enables them to increase investments but also provides the owners assurance in the event of shocks such as the Asian financial crisis.

However to better secure property rights, an efficient land administration system is needed, and in the Philippines, it is far from ideal. For instance, while it takes only two and a half hours to register a land title in Thailand, it can take up to 48 to 60 months in the Philippines. The problem does not take effect but we need to eliminate the gaps.

Unknown to many, the Philippines has just finished implementing the last phase of the ADB and World Bank funded Land Administration and Management Project (Lamp) to help modernize the land administration system. The project is also expected to improve the efficiency of land administration services. The project is in preparation for a new more land administration and Management Projects, the design of which they are currently fine-tuning. One of the ambitious measures in the program is the unification of all land administration agencies under a single Land Administration Authority (LAA). LAA has already been filed in Congress calling for such integration.

All these were main directives and policy interventions make a lot of sense, but it is not as simple as it seems. According to Mary Racelis of the Institute of Philippine Culture, as she said "it's all about people"—people who, as Commissioner Oscar Felizmon of the Bureau of Agrarian Reform Information (BARC) puts it, "spend other than their money."

A formal conference can apply to only 10 percent of the population and because of the remaining 90 percent may easily create more disparity and poverty. Thus, one has to be aware of social structures and the different material arrangements. Starting a certificate of land title to just one of many who have been living on the land for decades of its people, particularly the poor. Other arrangements must be replaced because there is no single way of providing land security just as there is no single way of alleviating poverty. Thus, any land administration program, from its inception, must ensure the participation of the poor and get their views as well.

There is much more to the conference and to the issue of land administration reform than can be written here. Indeed, land administration and land issues are highly complicated—legally, technically, sociologically and politically. Which leads me to wonder on the fifth noon of the last day of the conference, why the [illegible] announced his candidacy. Is "Da King" up to the task? It certainly takes more than connections and good intentions.

Ensuring that the design of the long-term Land Administration and Management Projects is sociologically, legally, economically and technically sound, the most important thing is to have a government that has the political will to implement it, given the ethic elements that will be involved in affected, although the program has been labelled as a "priority program" by the President, her failure to mention it in her last State of the Nation Address and her absences from the conference (she sent Agrarian Reform Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan to read his speech) say otherwise.

Many more of the impression that she was too busy campaigning to care about a reform agenda that may constitute to poverty alleviation. But in her credit, she may have calculated that with many of the participants coming from other countries, she may not be much interested to appear engaging in the conference, unlike for example, an appearance in a wild-out Manila Manor scenario. The President may simply setting her priorities. And land administration reform may be the least of them.

Learning on the job

AT LARGE

Nina Jimenez-David

"LEARNING on the job." That seems to be the standard excuse invoked out by officials or aspirants-to-public office when they take on an assignment or run for an office for which they are clearly unqualified.

While guesting in the TV show "Debate," newsbuzzing "star" Angelo Reyes explains away the double talent about his competence and his management style as summed up by describing the public that he has "a lot learning more" and could quickly "learn on the job."

While he himself has yet to clearly address the issues supposedly presidential candidates have to handle, Sr. Joseph Estrada was almost locked out of formal schooling and unexperience in public service by saying that he is smart and, more important, has his heart in the right place and could quickly "learn on the job" once he's elected president.

I do believe these men are sincere and well-meaning. There's no doubt that they will manage to learn something from the jobs they hold; it is impossible for them to be [illegible] much with the basics, unless [illegible] on the [illegible].

Because "learning on the job" presumes not injury the lesser of one is current mistakes, learn from those mistakes, and devise new approaches to the problems at hand. It presumes to give the company public or the entrusted is improvement all the time, looking on the "learning more" of new laws and fresh guidance. But after six months, assuming that classification of the job is correct, the learning curve should be complete; unless [illegible] to keep doped up and [illegible] from "learning" to "performing" on the job.

Running these folks, one would think, on some kind of [illegible] the luxury of time and can afford [illegible] and discretion as our leaders grope their way through government.

* * *

STOP the presses! The news is that we are in danger! ... and if we don't pull ourselves out of the mire, we'll be buried in it. The Philippines has already succeeded ground to our next whole "Circle" in the region, Thailand, and has given up [illegible] as the [illegible] country in Asia.

Worse, we are in danger of losing our status as the [illegible] in the world. Maybe some started to like Poe and he's going to win. Maybe people got confused. They were not all sure."

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Getting to know the 'juramentado'

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

A LITTLE over a month ago as some members of our family were taking an evening stroll around the downtown shopping district of Ilocos, we noticed an unusual deployment of policemen, armed with shotguns instead of their usual pistols. There were no uniformed soldiers in sight, only heavily armed men and we were clueless about it. She insisted on returning home, fearing a gang war or shooting where the aroma of the Philippines would be caught in the crossfire. Maybe, she reckoned with some flair, there was shoot-out and, since we were Japanese, we could be within range and not knowingly be fourth expended.

Such paranoia is what keeps people like her alive. In contrast, I love reading into a rattling machine gun fusillade as a sign that a basketball game has end up as a casualty somewhere, sometime.

The experience reminded me of recent trips to Mindanao where some genuinely concerned people would warn me into canceling the trip for reasons, some inaccurate, about safety, implying that I was a target. Mon Mon Mercado, Liberal Front or the *juramentado*. It is the latter that seems overwhelming to ignorant lowland Christian people like myself.

In the popular imagination, a *juramentado* is a Muslim warrior who wears an outfit of daughter as many Christians as possible before being killed himself in the process. The root word is the Spanish *juramentar*, meaning to take an oath.

Come Arab Majid makes sense that distinctions are the one of the ways which changed my viewpoint of the *juramentado*. For one thing, the *juramentado* defines armed at random. His attacks are planned, pre-meditated, and aimed at Christian soldiers during the so-called Moro Wars. The terror *juramentado* is said Filipinos when they hear the *juramentado* cries. In terms of person, the *juramentado* [illegible] on the air." That seems to be the standard excuse invoked out by officials or aspirants-to-public office when they take on an assignment or run for an office for which they are clearly unqualified.

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Running these folks, one would think, on some kind of [illegible] the luxury of time and can afford [illegible] and discretion as our leaders grope their way through government.

* * *

STOP the presses! The news is that we are in danger! ... and if we don't pull ourselves out of the mire, we'll be buried in it. The Philippines has already succeeded ground to our next whole "Circle" in the region, Thailand, and has given up [illegible] as the [illegible] country in Asia.

Worse, we are in danger of losing our status as the [illegible] in the world. Maybe some started to like Poe and he's going to win. Maybe people got confused. They were not all sure."

His discussion is tentative, "What more can you read out of these numbers?" has not helped clear the air.

Regarding what got people "excited," I can't recall any spectacular events occurring between Nov. 8 and 24 that could have boosted Poe's popularity. The survey ended two days before Poe announced his presidential candidacy for 2004, on Nov. 26. The events that succeed the latest date during the survey are the major funeral completed in the country, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's alleged trip to Hong Kong, the rekindled word-war between Congress and the Supreme Court and pushed the country to the edge of a constitutional crisis. I don't see any relationship between the crisis and Poe, who was not in the picture at that time. Perhaps one of the five most notable matters about him was that he stayed away from taking a position on the crisis. He was prudent enough to remain undefined on an issue that divided the nation deeply. It is hard to see how silence during the crisis contributed substantially to the gain.

Of course, pollsters claim that they are doing no more than merely reflect preferences, and that, they have not to be public to make some of the survey results, unmasked by reasons taken also have a duty to explain what their survey means. Mangahas has not succeeded illuminating what he explained. But Poe's gain was at the expense of De Castro, as the latter's came "migrated" to Poe, as well as Vice President Teofisto Guingona and Sen. Gregorio Honasan, who were near the tail end of the survey. Further muddling the picture are the survey findings that "all other" and "undecided" who offered such responses to "what other place here is an emotional election, not an intellectual election." These remarks made the intelligence of the voters, who are deemed not to be using their heads when voting. Another economist praised "it is a profound discovery to "We're a disturbed people ... We're attracted to contrasts." This remark does not explain why the suddenly received a favorable shift in popularity.

Mangahas also posed the open question: "Among the names on the list, whom would you most probably vote for as president of the Philippines if elections were held today?" Then the SWS hastened to label the results. Nothing in the questionnaire asked respondents why they would vote for Poe, or De Castro, Roco or Cabal. There we have no idea what makes Poe stand out to the 23 percent who voted for him in the survey. At the time of the survey he was a virtual political unknown when not of identity with the people in political movies.

The survey does not define what voters expect from Poe. Suppose he wins the election, are our people merely for good and the details indulged, not troubled to know what to expect or where he will lead the country? The danger in the results of the survey is that they do not help our people in making intelligent and informed choices. Because they do not provide the concrete elements in which the surveys are conducted, surveys elect the cult of personality, and put the blame for a candidate's defeat on the fact that voters are deceived rather than who succeed this country's compromised honesty.

Surveys have supplanted the institutional mechanisms for the selection or candidates for public public office. They are responsible to public powerbrokers in dumping on the people trash. If voters have no choice except trash, they will get the leadership they deserve, which is nothing but trash.

Land administration reform and poverty

IT was difficult to comprehend how people could be talking about land administration reform and poverty alleviation in such a turnaround setting in the New World Intercontinental Hotel in Makati. Maybe it is one of those accountants realities that, they say, one should get used to as development work.

Sure say this incongruous aside, the conference itself got off to a good start in the [illegible] as the participants in its table were concerned. When Australian ambassador Ruth Pearce gave the welcome address, a number of participants immediately quipped that the conference should have been held in Oakwood, eliciting laughter from all except for one who did not get the reference to the Oakwood name) where the attendant room temperature had been "too cool." I thought that temperature must have given her an understanding of how second annual anti-dotes from poverty, the major theme of the conference.

The event was the three-day International Conference on Reform in Land Administration Systems, jointly sponsored by the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, the Australian government of Australia and the World Bank. It was attended by delegates from Ghana, Lao PDR, Cambodia, Indonesia, East Timor, Thailand, El Salvador, Ethiopia and Vietnam.

The significance of land administration reform in poverty alleviation was immediately discussed on the first day. According to the Human Development Report issued by the World Bank, for most of the poor in developing countries, land is the primary means for generating a livelihood and the main vehicle for investing and accumulating wealth and transferring it down through generations.

In the case of the Philippines, a senate economic board by Professor Leonor Briones, development authority reported that 70 percent of the poor are in agriculture and fisheries while 25 percent use their own houses as base for economic activities (i.e., carry-out stores or junk shops). Land is therefore an important asset for the Filipino poor. But, as Dr. Briones pointed out, many of the poor do not make optimal use of their land because of the outdated specter of losing it. Thus, security is needed.

Following the Dr. Soto principle, security increases the assurance for the owners to invest and produce, those with less security are more because they can use their land as collateral. But not only enables them to increase investments but also provides the owners assurance in the event of shocks such as the Asian financial crisis.

However to better secure property rights, an efficient land administration system is needed, and in the Philippines, it is far from ideal. For instance, while it takes only two and a half hours to register a land title in Thailand, it can take up to 48 to 60 months in the Philippines. The problem does not take effect but we need to eliminate the gaps.

Unknown to many, the Philippines has just finished implementing the last phase of the ADB and World Bank funded Land Administration and Management Project (Lamp) to help modernize the land administration system. The project is also expected to improve the efficiency of land administration services. The project is in preparation for a new more land administration and Management Projects, the design of which they are currently fine-tuning. One of the ambitious measures in the program is the unification of all land administration agencies under a single Land Administration Authority (LAA). LAA has already been filed in Congress calling for such integration.

All these were main directives and policy interventions make a lot of sense, but it is not as simple as it seems. According to Mary Racelis of the Institute of Philippine Culture, as she said "it's all about people"—people who, as Commissioner Oscar Felizmon of the Bureau of Agrarian Reform Information (BARC) puts it, "spend other than their money."

A formal conference can apply to only 10 percent of the population and because of the remaining 90 percent may easily create more disparity and poverty. Thus, one has to be aware of social structures and the different material arrangements. Starting a certificate of land title to just one of many who have been living on the land for decades of its people, particularly the poor. Other arrangements must be replaced because there is no single way of providing land security just as there is no single way of alleviating poverty. Thus, any land administration program, from its inception, must ensure the participation of the poor and get their views as well.

There is much more to the conference and to the issue of land administration reform than can be written here. Indeed, land administration and land issues are highly complicated—legally, technically, sociologically and politically. Which leads me to wonder on the fifth noon of the last day of the conference, why the [illegible] announced his candidacy. Is "Da King" up to the task? It certainly takes more than connections and good intentions.

Ensuring that the design of the long-term Land Administration and Management Projects is sociologically, legally, economically and technically sound, the most important thing is to have a government that has the political will to implement it, given the ethic elements that will be involved in affected, although the program has been labelled as a "priority program" by the President, her failure to mention it in her last State of the Nation Address and her absences from the conference (she sent Agrarian Reform Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan to read his speech) say otherwise.

Many more of the impression that she was too busy campaigning to care about a reform agenda that may constitute to poverty alleviation. But in her credit, she may have calculated that with many of the participants coming from other countries, she may not be much interested to appear engaging in the conference, unlike for example, an appearance in a wild-out Manila Manor scenario. The President may simply setting her priorities. And land administration reform may be the least of them.

THEY SAID

Rising debt

"While we get embroiled in politicking and bickering, while our attention is gobbled by political posturing, the debt storms, like a mean locusts, it seems, many ... Are we dodgy there, starving of our consideration in the process, incomplete as unless in the forthcoming [illegible]?

The INQUIRER is a member of the PHILIPPINE PRESS INSTITUTE (The National Association of Philippine Newspapers)

In reply to anti-FPJ e-mail

LETTERS

THIS letter is in response to an e-mail being circulated by allegedly "ordinary students with no political affiliations" asking Fernando Poe Jr. not to run for president in the coming elections.

Much, usually criticisms, has been said about Poe and his supposed candidacy for the presidency in the 2004 elections. I believe that that is quite unfair because they have already hampered and judged the person, even if they do not truly know him, much less his capabilities as a leader.

Unfortunately, these people clamoring for Poe not to run, do not really know the sentiments of the masses. Instead, they only applaud for their own elitist interests and trivial matters that concern themselves only. They are not capable of feeling the sentiments of the majority, the masses, the poor.

Poe is not a politician by profession. He is a man who has worked hard for his money and fame. He is a man who has been in the limelight for the longest time in the history of Philippine movies. He is a man who has been in the limelight for a long time in the history of Philippine movies. He is a man who has been in the limelight for a long time in the history of Philippine movies.

I personally believe that what our country needs now is a true leader, not a politician. A true leader, who is not only capable of healing the Filipino people as progress, economic or otherwise, but also inspire them to work for the common good of our country.

Needless to say, this means this election's qualification, key to the opinion of a true leader, the last the intelligence that can steal any candidate's knowledge of old concepts and a wisdom that he has gained from being with the common man. He also has an unselfish appreciation of honesty and genuine humility that most, if not all politicians, do not possess.

And most of all, Poe is a Filipino who truly loves his country. And he has won the hearts of many not because of his commercials popularity as a movie hero, but because of his ability to inspire, touch and reach the lives of most Filipinos.

—ESPERITO C. CAPE,
Club 777 Volunteers Bilgala,
fj2004@yahoo.com

Who are Guardians in news reports?

THE title of the generic term *the Guardians* in referring to the Philippine Constitution Brotherhood Inc. (PCBI) in a recent news report on Nov. 15, is unfair to the brotherhood of fraternities nationwide.

In the Securities and Exchange Commission records and from my own knowledge, there are approximately 3.5 million Guardians in the country dispersed in 56 groups, the biggest of which is the Original Guardians Brotherhood Inc. of Ur "Lapulapu" Tondo, organized in 1979.

The PCBI was only organized in 2000, and the United Guardians Party is only in 2002.

The PCBI comprises less than 10 percent of the total membership of the Guardians nationwide, and most of its chapters outside Metro Manila even condemn their leaders' involvement in political partisan activities of late because its constitution and by-laws states, in disallow it.

It would be prudent for the inquirer to refer to the PCBI as the "PCBI-Humanist Group" or "Guardians Fraternity Inclusive," or simply the name of the Guardians the absence of unprincipled partisan political activities such as the Oakwood mutiny and the recent rally in Ayala Avenue, Makati last week.

The United Guardians Party, on the other hand, is now consolidating its membership, and volunteers its services in the "vicinity, pro-bono and actively involved in democratic activities."

—GELACIO C. GUEVARA,
national chairman,
United Guardians Party,
8, Carini St., Sabangbahin,
Mandaue City, Cebu

AR's death demands retribution

AS a parent, I grieve with Miriam and Ramon Santiago Jr. over the tragic loss of their beloved son, Alexander Robert (AR), in an altercation at the UP College of Law. I urge the dean of the college to investigate the allegations of the Santiagos that their son was subjected to inordinate and cruel questions by the faculty's admission panel during his interview.

If the allegations are found to be true, the guilty parties must be dismissed from the faculty as there is no place for bias, intolerance and moral cruelty in the academe. Members of the panel who subjected AR are not particularly fit to be mentors at the university's premier law school.

Many of us may dislike the politics of Mr. Santiago but his son's application for admission had nothing to do with his politics.

—RODOLFO L. CUNAL,
Intramuros Village,
Makati City

FPJ for president?

SINCE announcing his intention to run for president, Fernando Poe Jr. (FPJ) has come under attack from all sectors. For most remember that he moves all the constitutional requirements of presidential candidacy.

I am not here to argue about his other actions as his controlled virtue or speculate on what kind of president he would be if he wins. My point is: Let the Filipino people decide if they elect their leader by factual or by wrong. Whatever the consequences of their decision, they should not blame anybody except themselves.

If the Philippines will become one of the best countries in Asia under the next presidency, it will be because of the decisions of the country will become a living hell, it will still be because of the electorate.

The people deserve the government they want (because in a democracy), as we know, the power of the government comes from the people.—Tony Higuera, via e-mail

I don't care if FPJ is not Filipino, kind, responsible, etc.,

We will be a puppet president if elected. The many just is this he will be used by the people around him.

I am very disappointed that FPJ allowed himself to be used. He will be remembered as the one who chose to rent his "friends" rather than running of the country.—Ernie Bautista, via e-mail

Well let's face it. FPJ has the right to run for president in 2004. What's the fuss being done? Fans. I have the right to run for president although I don't have any experience in politics like FPJ right? Well, I'll say pro-FPJ, but what about this: For Filipino people have had a celebrity mayor (Vidal V. Ramos), a genius (Wenceslao Marcos), an economist (Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo), a martyr (Corazon C. Aquino), and an actor (Joseph Estrada). Well, FPJ not fantastic are both actors but FPJ has no visit like Estrada, right?

We have solid everything but will see FPJ gonna save in bad shape. If you say FPJ is corrupt, well, let's say a drastic president. For all we know, he may be the one who will help us.—Melvin M. Alfredo, via e-mail

Just like in the movies, each presidency is coming up with the best love-team to make a hit movie. Who we have to be? Gloria Macapagal Arroyo-Sen. de Castro love team against the candidacy of FPJ-Loren Legarda or FPJ-Bello-Lacson, Movie fans are already lining up to contribute to making a box office hit of these actual movie.

After the cheering, reality has an ugly in the face. This economy is going to be dogs. A country that is bombed by huge financial problems, a corrupt government, a wedding of a junior leader, a wretched army, an enervated judiciary system, growing poverty, a culture of selfishness and an hour of misery.

With this way I reality, these political parties select their "stars" on the basis of popularity. As in the movies, hopefully it will end with, "and they lived happily ever after."

Why do we always have to choose the lesser of two evils? Why can't we have a choice between good and evil?

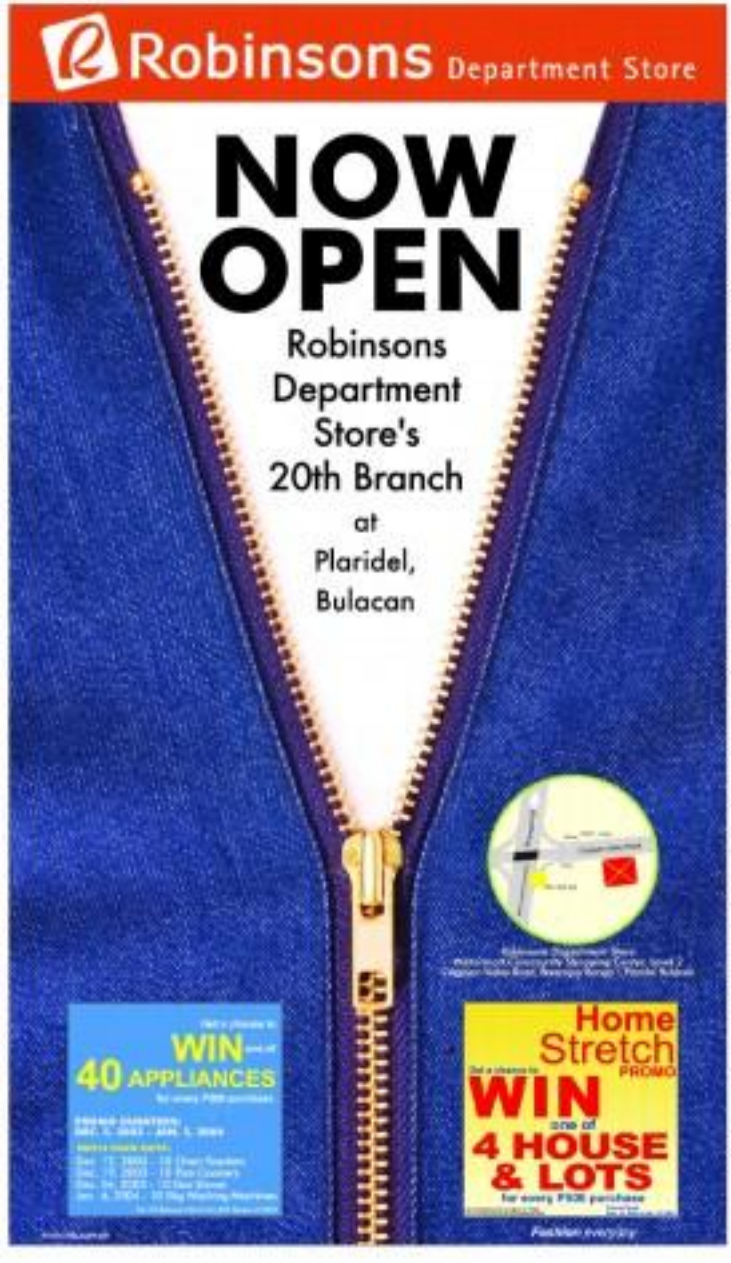
Is there anyone out there who is God-fearing, righteous, with integrity and loves the country that he is willing to give his life like Filipino a words dying for an honest law, honest system in Zimbabwe? Please rise up on the occasion and never fear. I believe millions of silent, desperate Filipinos are with you.—Ariel Granada, via e-mail

How every-suspicious-case FPJ is suddenly affliated with a Ba-like sickness. Why a few. Vicente Sotto III doing the speaking for FPJ? Can't FPJ do it himself?—Jun Lacanlo, via e-mail

Like FPJ, but only in the movies because he always wins according to the script. I wish there were a script for his presidency so that we will know the outcome of his term. FPJ should learn his lesson against those people who pushed him to run. They are want to be president.—Frederick Elizabeth, via e-mail

It would be again another mistake if FPJ gets Legarda as his running mate. We will repeat the same scenario that happened with Estrada-Macapagal when the two came out as the winners in the 1998 elections.—Bedrich V. Lemoine, via e-mail

VOICES ON INQ7.NET



Paragua eyes strong showing

By Roy Luneta

HO CHI MINH City — He's been travelling around the world since he turned nine. Mark Paragua is now 19 years old and still in fast pursuit of his grandmaster title.

The country's brightest chess prospect flew in here yesterday to join the Philippine chess team vying to improve on third in the inaugural edition of the event in the 22nd Southeast Asian Games.

"Hindi pa po ako nkapasa kasi sa isa ang laglag ko sa mga international tournaments. Siguro ma-tyan ako sa mga laging nasa labas ng Asian 10 [when] ko accomplished ako ko international tournaments since I was a kid. I'm used to being out of the country most of the time," he said.

PARAGUA

Paragua arrived last Patchanday from France after a five-month stint in Europe.

During to the lack of GM opponents, he failed to earn his second GM result but earned his IG rating to 2511, putting him ahead of GM Eugene Torre (2509) and behind GM Joey Antonio (2522).

Here, Paragua will be battled by both the standard and rapid events where he and Antonio are among the favorites.

Like Torre and Antonio, Paragua believes the RP team's bronze, which includes GM Rong Villamayor and IM Ronald Dableo and Jayson Gonzales are capable of winning at least two of the four golds at stake.

"Mukhlas ang chance nami sa team, naman eh po kami at dito sa individual siguro [We have a strong chance in teams and so, our event with Joey]," said Paragua, who swept two rapid tournaments in France before he flew back home to Manila, Bulatlat.

Sta. Lucia Tour final leg up today

THE DEBASE characters of two championship courses hosting the last two stops are expected to unveil the three aces race for the overall title down the wire as the Sta. Lucia Tour tempers today at Biwanga Mountains course of the Eagle Ridge Golf and Country Club in Gen. Trias, Cavite.

The up-and-down Pinatan layout, which opened only last September, will be an entirely new experience for all the 240 campaigners. And even Eagle Ridge members—their backs against the wall in the title race—can hardly claim homecourt edge.

Taking the lead going into the last 36 holes of play, including tournament's final round at the Orchard Golf and Country Club at the ultra Vista Golf and Country Club of Cebu.

The Colosseum, the defending champions, will try to protect a nine-point lead over Nanako Sidus' Indoc duty built with strong performances in Davao last September and in the second leg they leased in November.

But Eagle Ridge, which is 12 points adrift, can still pull off a big comeback.

The Sta. Lucia Tour is sponsored by Unitrek, Petron, Readyrose, Glutnet Marketing, Kubota, Kodak, Samsung, Trifoto, Pampita Yamaha, Omega, Bigtex, Bilanci Polo (Davao), Manila Cordon, Dunlop Road Bikes and Cebu Pacific.

Why other SUVs are trailing behind.

The new Nissan X-TRAIL was designed to be better than the leading SUV and others in its class. You enjoy the riding comfort of a luxury sedan. The QR series engines put out more power (140 ps for the 2.0 liter and 165 ps for the 2.5 liter). Luggage space is the largest with enough room for five golf bags or even two full-sized mountain bikes. Safety features are standard across all models: front airbags to ABS. Most importantly, the All Mode 4x4 is the ahead of other 4WD systems. Whether you select 2WD, 4WD Lock or 4WD Auto, you are in complete control under any driving condition. And with the electronically controlled coupling, you can shift on the fly at any speed.
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Across the NATION
Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

DAWAD CHRISTMAS

Davao City won't be left behind in preparations for the holidays. This 48-foot Christmas tree is one sign that the city is getting ready to greet the coming Christmas season.

Port project becoming Payumo, Gordon battle

By Jan Mulig
and Nitan Mallonza
INQ Central Luzon Desk

SUBIC BAY FREEPORT (DPA)—Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority Chair Felicito Payumo has asked Malacañang to compel Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon to refrain from criticizing the $215-million Subic port development project.

Gordon, on the other hand, has been alleging that a "disinformation campaign" about the project is being waged.

For Payumo, Gordon has no business opposing the port project.

"Gordon struck out during his turn of the bat. Now, it is the SBMA administration's turn at the bat. We should be allowed to proceed. Other wise we will be slapping much of the international financial community," Payumo said.

"After four years of getting the port development to this stage, from the feasibility study, and securing the financing, we now tell our partners that our word is worthless because we made a mistake at to the location? Sir will be very, very embarrassed. This could happen only in the Philippines," he said.

Gordon, in his capacity as Cabinet Officer for Regional Development Council (CORD) of Central Luzon, has been opposing the port project.

He is questioning not only the plans to reclaim 39 hectares in Cubi Point for the new port but also the $88Mdollar plans to borrow $117 million from the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) for the port development.

He also cited pro-environmental groups' concerns over the possibility of severe damage to the marine ecosystems in Cubi Point once the proposed port is built.

PAYUMO

GORDON

Gordon said the former US Navy facility is "most (NOT) suitable for a port" "good enough" for the project. He said the World Bank had identified the area as "an ideal site" for handling containerized cargo.

But Payumo said the shoaling area of a new port at Cubi Point is similar to areas in the Subic port, unlike with ports in Singapore, Hong Kong and South Korea. He said the 9000-area is not capable of handling bigger modern cargo ships.

"The 9000 is in a cramped location. The Yacht Club is down, even the Jaguar and Mitsubishi are there. The area is too constricted and risky to be used by larger modern cargo ships. The Japanese consultants have recommended the location of the new port after thoroughly studying all other considerations. All factors that will ensure the port's success in the long term," Payumo said.

Last month, Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri arranged a meeting between Payumo and Gordon to patch up their differences over the port project.

Board Convention Development Authority president Subic Cesario, also a main proponent of the port project, was also invited to the meeting.

But what should be a reconciliation turned into a violent exchange between Gordon and Payumo.

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But what should be a reconciliation turned into a violent exchange between Gordon and Payumo. Eduyoco claimed that a close aide of Gordon had attacked him, punching him in the stomach. The Gordon camp denied Eduyoco's claim.

On Nov. 6, the Zambales provincial board passed a resolution expressing their full support for the new port project, urging the Bataan's contempt the supposed "disunion" being cited by those opposing the project.

The mayors of the four towns around Subic Freeport were: Subic, Olongapo, Iba, Masinloc and Santa Cruz. Barangay officials have also expressed their support for the project.

Officials of Olongapo City, whose mayor, Katherine Gordon, wife of Secretary Gordon, are opposing the project.

Protests

On Nov. 24, more than 1,000 residents in Olongapo City staged a protest rally to assail the port project that they considered a threat to the environment.

"We will not allow the wanton destruction of Subic's virgin forest and pristine waters which no protocol and protected when the Americans left 11 years ago," said Bobby Javier, president of Olongapo-based Demand and Sequard of the North.

Javier said his group is not against the port development but is asking the SBMA to compromise its development that addresses environmental concerns.

Calling the project "port endangerment," Vice Mayor Cesar Chia Calado led the rally and ranted environmental issues such as destruction of coral reef and sea grass bed, and wastes and air pollution that the construction of the port would bring about.

Calado said if the port were built in Cubi Point, it would make fishermen near the area suffer economically since the area would be a major fishing ground.

City officials who joined the protest action said the main action was a last-ditch appeal to President Macapagal-Arroyo and Environment Secretary Elisea Gozun to reject the project and consider other alternatives that are more environment-friendly.

Lecturers' support

The Subic Bay Freeport Chamber of Commerce however has expressed its support for the port project, which it said would spark this freeport's development as an international seaport.

But the business group has asked the SBMA to consider putting up mitigating measures to lessen the project's impact on the area's air quality, forests and marine environment.

Michael Lenhoff, managing director of the Advanced Ocean Concepts Philippines Inc. boatyard without a major expansion of port facilities, "Subic will never be able to reach its potential."

Adam Tsuji, president of the Subic Turbocoach Corp., said Japanese investors here believe that the port project must start as the completion soon.

'Pidal' to remain 'private'

BAGUIO CITY—The President's brother-in-law Ignacio "Iggy" Arroyo Jr. will continue invoking his "right to privacy" should the Senate resume its investigation of the Jose Pidal accounts.

He said he would be ready to answer questions if opposition Sen. Panfilo Lacson could present evidence of alleged wrongdoing on his part.

"It is all right if the Senate reopens the investigation... because I have nothing to hide," he said.

But he said Lacson should present concrete and not just rehash old allegations. "What Lacson is doing is going on a fishing expedition," he added.

When asked why he was invoking his right to privacy, Arroyo replied: "It is my right because it is private matters that they [senators] are asking."

Senate President Franklin Drilon on Wednesday ordered the committee on banks and commercial amendments to continue with the stalled hearings. Cirilo P. Gomez, *INQ Visayas Bureau*

Fish kill hits 2 towns in Zambales

SUBIC, Zambales—A massive fish kill hit the towns of Palauig and Masinloc starting Nov. 24, prompting fish pen and cage operators to hastily harvest their unripe (milkfish) in these areas.

Residents in the two towns said an unconfirmed fish feed in the fishing structures affected the water quality in the areas.

Yesterday's abay, chief of Masinloc Barangay Liwa Adlawan ay Lamayo (Malayo), said the fish kill also affected other marine species, like coral fish and crabs that were found floating dead.

Abay said water became brownish and has foul odor due to the illegal operations of fish cages at the Dayon Bay, another area in Masinloc.

The marine waters in has been declared a protected area under the National Integrated Protected Area System (Nipas) act and is governed by the Protected Area Management Board (PAMB).

About 100 fish cages were built in the area without an environmental compliance certificate and permit from PAMB, the DENR found in December last year.

Abay, members of a fishermen's group, said the cleared area on the beach of Fish kill similar to that in Bolinao, Pangasinan, after Marcelino, *PCR Central Luzon Desk*

Gloria orders speedy probe of Koreans' slay

By Jhonnex Napallacan
INQ Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—President Macapagal-Arroyo has ordered the police to speed up the investigation of the killing of two Korean traders in Lapulapu City Marine Island last Saturday.

She also said her office can provide reward for those who can give information that will lead to the solution of case.

Oh Soon Sik and Kim Suk Dam, both 52, were shot dead by motorcycle-riding assailants on Saturday night while the Koreans were on their way home in Barangay Marigondon, Lapulapu City.

The killing alarmed the South Korean government, which was looking into the possibility of issuing a travel ban against Cebu and the Philippines.

But President Macapagal said the Department of Foreign Affairs was coordinating with the Korean Embassy to discuss the matter.

Ms. Macapagal granted a requested broadcast interview, aired live over several radio stations in Cebu City.

The President said the police should immediately resolve the case, as the repeated her gratitude to the Koreans for visiting the country, which helped boost the country's tourism industry.

"It's very important that the police in Cebu should really find a way out of this ..." President said.

She, however, said she was confident that the case would be solved because Chief Supt. Roberto Dehin, police director for Central Visayas, was considered one of the best intelligence officers in the Philippine National Police.

"We can support them (police) by providing for a system of reward for those who will give the information that can lead to the solution of the crime," the President added.

She, however, did not specify any amount.

Dehin assured the President and the public that the police were doing their best to solve the crime even without the cash reward.

He, however, said the cash reward could help them in the investigation.

The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and the Philippine Center for Transnational Crime (PCTC) are looking into the possibility that another Korean trader might be involved in the killing.

Pangasinan wins population award

LINGAYEN, Pangasinan—The province of Pangasinan was awarded the Rafael M. Salas Population and Development Award (PMPDA) for its "unparalleled achievements in the field of population and development."

Governor Victor Agbayani and provincial population officer Lay Mangu last week received the gold medallion awarded in a glass box from Alfredo Pio de Roda, president of the Rafael Salas Foundation, and Emma Ortiz, executive director of the Commission on Population.

Ortiz said the foundation cited Pangasinan for its "achievement in population and development..."

"The complex work of developments has two sides, one side is the effort to provide for basic needs, for income and food security, and the other side is population management. He realistic battle against poverty can be waged that does not address both sides," Agbayani said in his acceptance speech.

Dating, Leyte and Naga City also won.

The award, given to individuals, institutions, non-government organizations and local governments, is in honor of diplomat Rafael Salas, who initiated the United Nations Fund for Population. Salas was first director of the UNFPA. Yolanda Sotelo-Perrino, *INQ Northern Luzon Bureau*

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Solon's son accused of beating up reporter

QUEZON CITY—Aron-Aron del Norte Rep. Ardiente Amante has been accused of beating up a freelance cameraman here on December 28.

But even before Daniel Pinedillas, 29, a former reporter of Radyo Bahay-Bahayan, could say God, the Amantes challenged the victim to the charges in court.

According to Pinedillas's elder brother Salvador, Judge John Amante, son of Rep. Ardiente Amante, was behind the attack.

Salvador said on the night of the incident, his brother had an appointment with Representative Amante at the congressman's home in Brgy. Culiat, Quezon City.

Upon his arrival, Daniel was told by the lawmaker's wife that his appointment had to be rescheduled because the elder Amante was not around. On his way out, Felipe allegedly fired his .45 caliber pistol, prompting Daniel to stop and tell the young Amante that it was not a bird he had shot.

But Felipe allegedly again fired at him. The young Amante also allegedly ordered his father's aides to beat the radio reporter and hurt him up.

"My brother even pleaded for his life but [Felipe] Amante continued firing his gun until it hits," an angry Salvador said.

Aside from the fatal cuts, lacerations and bruises that he suffered, Alfredo said his brother is in a state of shock.

But Gov. Angelica Amante defended his brother and denied the Pinedillas's allegations.

"After all, you might not even know that Pinedillas has owed my brother [sic]," the governor said.

Felipe, a newcomer, is widely seen as Governor Amante's successor in next year's elections.

The incident was the latest attack on media personalities and organizations in the Congo Region.

In October, two armed men stormed the broadcast center of Radyo Natin in downtown Daliig City. Rodgen did not and destroyed its office equipment and transmitters.

It was not the first time that the Amantes have stirred controversy here.

Recently, Representative Amante's brother, Nilo, was charged with the alleged smuggling of P77 million worth of cars at the Manila port here. Reynaldo M. Calligrid, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Gunmen abduct 4, shoot them dead near mosque

LAMBANGIA CITY—Armed men in military uniforms removed four civilians, including a Muslim cleric, during a raid in Barangay Bilal, about 50 km from here Wednesday, police reported yesterday.

Insp. Mario Vanga, city police director, said the armed men barged into the homes of the four victims in Sitio Mamagpai, pulled them up and brought them near a mosque where they were shot dead.

Vanga identified the victims as Bilang Abdurra, 42, a barangay councilor in Bilal; Imam Jalilul Abadil, 47; Mubbil Abadil, 37 and Sidrael Abadil, 33.

The abduction-killing was discovered in Barangay Dilipe. Imams continued firing his gun until it hits," an angry Adonis said.

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Armed men posing as cops seize trader

DAVAO CITY—Armed men posing as police officers snatched a trader in Carmen, Davao del Norte Thursday, police said yesterday.

Chief Insp. Jose Cornelio said Helen Tuano, 38, of Barangay New Malaysia was reportedly the man.

Police [illegible] to go with the men. The suspect forced him into a gray L-300 van with plate [illegible]. Dennis Jay C. Sancho, PDI Mindanao Bureau

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Officer slams PNP chief, gets sacked

Front page A1

the new appointments.

"It appears that he (Mallillin) is the problem," said Mallillin, who participated in the series of failed coup against the Arroyo administration in the 1990s. "He's not longer the solution but the problem. There's no longer teamwork in the PNP."

Chief Supt. Jaime Caringal, a top intelligence official who was supposed to have been removed as chief of the Caloocan police region, or office, had gone on vacation for hours beginning yesterday. He said he would consult his lawyer on the revamp.

Not basketballs

Like Mallillin, Gertopal deplored the seeming indecisiveness in the implementation of the revamp. "Sir, no professional officers and we should be treated as such," he told the Inquirer. "We are not basketballs that can be left bouncing."

Mallillin said only Ebdane and Director Jose Calimag of the directorate for personnel records management cooked up the reshuffle, which passed neither through the Senior Officers Placement Board nor the Nations-APMEA Commission.

To support his claim of corruption under Ebdane's leadership, Mallillin claimed that "36 to 25 percent" of the PNP fund "goes to waste" or to the pockets of unspecified "friends of the 'unspecified family.'"

Decrepit structures

The former CEDG chief said funds hardly reach police stations, which until now have decrepit structures and have yet to get decent office equipment and supplies.

"The funds go to corruption because of the current system," he told reporters. "Ebdane should implement genuine reforms but he can't achieve those through a reshuffle that did not go through the process."

Ireland says he came out with the allegations only after he was affronted by the revamp. Mallillin gave a vague response, saying that he was still completing documentation for the possible filing of charges against the PNP chief.

Favoritism

Mallillin also hinted at alleged favoritism under Ebdane's leadership.

The CEDG, according to him, has around 1,700 operatives but receives only P1.5 million monthly from the entire PNP budget. The Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response (Pacer) team headed by Senior Supt. Alan Purisima, one of Ebdane's most trusted lieutenants, on the other hand, has received 200 this year—more than P13 million monthly.

Two top officials yesterday said the stay in the appointments was triggered by intense lobbying by no less than Mallillin and his friend, Chief Supt. Reynaldo Obviar, who was supposed to have been replaced as chief of the Civil Relations Group. Obviar, a member of PMA Class 1980, had his name circulated until March next year by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Debt of gratitude

"If they had a conscience," said one official, "they should not have lobbied. They should have given others the chance to assume their posts. The President sincerely would not refuse them because of a debt of gratitude."

President Macapagal-Arroyo has denied that PNP officials chose to let more spared than the revamp.

"This reshuffle has long been planned and has nothing to do with politicians or personal bonds," she said in a statement, referring to the strategic challenge of high-profile crimes," she said in a statement out by this week.

Continuing revamp

She said the PNP would undergo a continuing reorganization in order to fine-tune its capabilities in fighting crime. She said it was one of the three legs of reform, which includes "operational reforms" and community-based support.

"We have to consolidate the police organization, prioritize our operational targets and gather the barangays around the whole criminal justice effort," she said.

Her spokesperson said police officials yesterday in shifts by the revamp. "We're hoping that these police officers will assume positions," she said. "We're hoping that these officers will assume positions and will abide by the orders of the PNP chief, and that they will cooperate with all anti-crime operations," Ignacio Bunye said.

New CEDG chief

Mallillin was replaced by Chief Supt. Arturo Lomibao whom old year, the directorate for intelligence, was assisted by Director Robert Delfin, reminder regional director for Central Visayas. Director Rolando Garcia

Lakas wins some, loses some to Roco, FPJ

Front page A1

Kalaw, Rilanon Oriental's and his bet with Roco is member of the "Old guard" in Lakas are also now with the Show group, including former Rep. Bert Lachuca, a former Lakas spokesperson.

But the administration party is also pointing the guidance of Ambrosio Padilla, the Lakas leadership in the House announced it had taken in three members of the opposition Lakas ng Demokratikong Pilipino to support the President's 2004 candidacy.

Deputy Speaker Raul Gonzalez Lakas, Iloilo City's said Representatives Concordia Jaraula (Capiz) de Ore City, Augusto Baculio (Misamis Oriental) and Ismael Sueta (Cebu) have joined Lakas.

Majority leader

Jaraula will assume the post of assistant majority leader in the House in a "classic parliamentary movement from the opposition to the ruling coalition," according to House Majority Leader Sergio Osmeña III and Speaker Jose de Venecia.

Lakas co-president and Speaker Jose de Venecia said Baculio would replace Moreno as Lakas chair for Misamis Oriental.

Gonzalez noted that Jaraula, Baculio and Sueta were previously affiliated with the LDP faction.

Lakas co-president and Speaker Jose de Venecia said Baculio would replace Moreno as Lakas chair for Misamis Oriental.

Gonzalez noted that Jaraula, Baculio and Sueta were previously affiliated with the LDP faction of Sen. Edgardo Angara, who is supporting some Fernandez like Jr.

FAAP mayor-to-mayor: Puerto Princesa Mayor Edward Hagedorn takes his oath as a member of the President's new party Lakas. AFP PHOTO/ROBERT

ing party Lakas-CMD in her newly room in Malacañang yesterday.

Sueta said he voted solely of gratitude to First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo for helping him in the recall election that put him back in power.

Gratitude

Asked if he would no longer be supporting Roy, he replied: "Let's put it this way, I owe a lot to First Gentleman Mike Arroyo."

Hagedorn appeared reluctant to support Roy, saying he was taking an Lakas member and stand away from the months.

When he arrived in Malacañang, he denied in a radio exposure that he would join Lakas, saying he was an NPC member.

But he ends taking seats in the Presidential Palace.

Hagedorn leader

Hagedorn emerged from the President's office 20 minutes before scheduled, accompanied by presidential deputy chief of staff Rene Velasco and Palawan Gov. Joel Reyes, a member of Lakas.

After his audit-talking, he told the President that he did not want to be interviewed. Malacañang said they dismissed the request and the two exited through the backdoor.

"FPJ supports GMA," Velasco said.

Polls here

He said both Poe and Hagedorn were close to Estrada, and that Hagedorn joined Poe in campaigning for him in the 1998.

Poe, Velasco said, was inspired by Hagedorn's life story and had his own FPJ Presidentiables pictures like movie. "Mr. Hagedorn] is a folk hero. He is known as King of Price by Princess," Velasco said.

The mayor was chosen by over 90 Palaweños in Manila in 1996.

Proven leader

Velasco said Hagedorn's entry into Lakas-CMD would fill the balance in favor of the administration in Palawan.

"Where are Erap's pals?

By Armand Nocum

IT COULD be the one-man trip.

Three days, deposed President Joseph Estrada said yesterday, Jews friends are visiting him in his detention quarters in Camp Capinpin, in Tanay, Rizal.

Some of his political allies, including sister Daisy Avenido, Princess Hayee Edward Hagedorn, have even joined the administration party Lakas-CMD.

But in a telephone interview, Estrada shrugged it all off, saying he has many friends staying with him.

"Of course, he may need something from the administration," Estrada said to Eliptico, referring to Hagedorn's decision to switch camps.

He added: "It's okay, that's how politics goes."

Estrada also laughed off talks that Jue Perez Mrs. Estrada's former presidential adviser for Mindanao, may run as vice-mayoral candidate in Zamboanga City under the Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats (CMD) party.

"Let him. I don't mind. He's never given up with the elections. I know him too well," said Estrada, who admitted having a falling out with Perez when the latter ignored his advice not to run against opposition candidate Mayor Maria Clara Lobregat in the last local elections.

Estrada admitted that Perez was one supporter who no longer visits him. Estrada is facing plunder and graft charges before the Sandiganbayan.

The previous was formerly the bailiwick of the late Speaker Ramon Mitra, whose son Abraham was representative of the district.

The coming Mitra, an LDP member, is backing the candidacy of opposition Sen. Pimentel Lacson.

Reached for comment, Mitra said he was not surprised about Hagedorn's decision.

Prize catch

He said Hagedorn had told him and his other allies in Palawan that he had to support Mr. Macapagal because of the First Gentleman's help when he ran in the recall election in October last year.

Mitra said Hagedorn is a prize catch for Lakas-because his loyalty and word of honor is beyond question. Once you get him on your side, you can count on him," Mitra said in a phone interview.

He said Hagedorn's followers also crossed to Lakas-CMD.

"He has a nationwide following," he said, saying that Hagedorn gets a warm reception even in other parts of the country.

Spice Boys coin GMA's battle cry

Front page A1

"By 2010, no projects won't be left hanging."

The candidate who will be elected in 2004 will serve for six years, hence the reference to 2010 in the Macapagal's campaign slogan.

Zubiri, a member of President Macapagal's campaign team, said the slogan embodied the central point of the President's message in the electronic continuity.

"The President has laid the foundations and would not want to see it go away with those by gambling on another candidate?" Zubiri said.

Zubiri repeated what the President's new political and campaign spokesperson, ex-Spice Boy and Housing Secretary Michael Defensor, said: the Macapagal self-adopt Baby Boy as presidential candidate is not official yet, but there is no agreement yet on whether to use a particular hand signal.

Speakers' bureau

Zubiri said the slogan, which he said he and Defensor crafted, would be made official on Monday.

Zubiri also said that the Spice Boys, the well-known group of young legislators in the 11th Congress, will rise again as the core of the speakers' bureau for the President's campaign.

The Spice Boys include Zubiri; Defensor; Bernasi Braganza, former Bagaudaan lawmaker and now presidential adviser for political affairs; and Rep. Rolex Suplico (Cebu), Surigao del Norte).

"The speakers' bureau will also include young members of the Cabinet," Zubiri said.

Zubiri identified three Cabinet officials as Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo and Energy Secretary Vicente Perez.

"Young speakers are purposely being mobilized to reach out to the young voters," Zubiri said.

Concrete programs

Going back to President Macapagal's "2010 para di hindi" campaign slogan, Zubiri said this would be defined by concrete programs.

Zubiri said the top priority would be infrastructure, particularly the setting up of railway systems, nationwide expansion in the roll-on, roll-off land and sea transport network, and the improvement of major thoroughfares.

Zubiri also said the President's program of action included a heightening of the campaign against illegal drugs.

Peace pacts

The anti-drug war has been supercharged because under the administration and we will continue with this," Zubiri said.

Zubiri also said Mr. Macapagal's program would also include continuity in efforts to forge final peace agreements with communist and Moro communist rebels.

"We will build on President Macapagal's achievements since she began serving in 2001 and where she's doing the records in the last 2004 onward," Zubiri said.

This is consistent with President Macapagal's own pronouncements that she has already boosted the egos of the presidency and has a track record her track cannot match.

Noli for president group to gather 3M signatures

Front page A1

target was six million signatures. The two million signatures of people urging him to run helped convince Poe to declare that he was joining the presidential race in May.

Healing, unifying leader

At a news conference in Quezon City, KPM spokesperson Jake Ballesteros said what the country needed was a veteran member of the media to "unify" the country.

"We need a healer, a healing and unifying leader. We believe he has handle that," said Ballesteros, a former official of a presidential commission on youth during the Ramos administration.

Ballesteros noted that for Cristobal Colon, a broadcaster, media is considered as a public service that involves listening to the truth, for 20 years.

Popularity needed

KPM president Louie Obispo said Dr. Cancio's popularity and a track record of public service would serve him to good stead in leading the country toward "unity and progress."

"How can one listen to the leader if the leader is not popular? One needs popularity to be listened to and not that it is not the only charismatic that Senator Dr. Cancio has," said Obispo, an owner of a trading firm based in Calbayog, Laguna.

Dr. Cancio and Poe are tied for the lead in the latest Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey in November. Despite low name recognition and the survey, which are transforming the country's political landscape, SWS is headed by Mahar Mangahas, Poe's first cousin.

Only five years ago, Filipinos elected film star Joseph Estrada as president and dumped him with the non-distance of a three-year-old before his term ended.

Media force

"Media are a force in this country and Jose Jesus Boni of the political science department Ateneo de Manila University.

To also explains why the strongest political party in the country is ABE-CBN," the broadcast network that employs Dr. Cancio," Lovinar said. "There are just the facts of life."

Star-struck people

The debate now includes Dr. Cancio and two other broadcasters, a movie star, a comedian, an ex-basketball player and the husband of two popular movie stars. Film and television personalities, singers and sportsmen also populate the House of Representatives and local posts.

The tidal wave of star talent in voting policies in the Philippines challenges the conventional wisdom that money, rather than personal charisma, wins elections.

"My take just tied is that we are a star-struck people. We have movie stars, celebrities, the beautiful and the famous," Lovinar said.

Tony Cornelio, a political analyst, noted that in Latin America, where democracy is relatively young, "movie stars have always gone into parliament. And in the United States, California has "Terminator" star Arnold Schwarzenegger as governor, a post previously occupied by one B-movie actor named Ronald Reagan.

Cornelio also noted that the present situation is mainly to many political politics, that, he said, conveys that by the nation in favor of media stars are self-fulfilling prophecies in themselves" because many donors would only give money to those with the best prospects of winning.

Disclose advisers

Opposition Sen. Jobo Osmeña challenged the camp of Poe to disclose the personalities behind his presidential bid.

Osmeña said it was incumbent upon Poe and Senate Minority Leader Vicente Sotto III, "to declare to the public the advisers surrounding (Poe)."

Osmeña noted that Sotto, the senator's spokesperson during his campaign, and the action-lining had said before top businessmen last week that the latter was forming an economic team, "but neither he or Sotto identified any member of the team."

Poe's early supporters from the Visayas and Mindanao wanted to find out, through the identifications of PEPs advisers, if their interests would be amply protected. "There's a perception that PEP is being surrounded only by solitaire Tondo financial lords."

Osmeña also requested appointments over the supposed support of Jed's leaning personalities for Poe's candidacy.

Stunt man

In the House of Representatives, House Minority Floor Leader Francis Escudero called on supporters of Poe to provide him with elaborate security measures until the presidential election was over.

"This is a vital and pressing

Continued on A18

Girl freed; No. 4 kidnapper arrested

Front page A1

A ranking police official involved in anti-kidnapping operations said the amount paid was "less than P1 million."

Members of the Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response Object arrested six of the child's kidnappers in separate operations in Cabanatuan City yesterday, authorities said.

The six—four of whom were identified as Allan Bonzilla, Ian Enriquez, Elmer Canoda and Ramil Canoda—were taken to Panit- headquarters at Camp Crame for investigation.

Authorities also said the kidnapping gang—a six-man group with three Toyota Revo with plate number WHK-971, believed stolen—had been found abandoned in the Sauyo-Ville Subdivision in Quezon City. It is now at the PNP Crime Laboratory in Camp Crame.

PRESIDENT Macapagal presides over the meeting on anti-kidnapping and other security concerns in Malacañang Thursday. Among those who attended the meeting are (from left) PNP-Chief Hermogenes Ebdane, Interior Secretary Jose Lina, Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, Manila Mayor Jose de Venecia and Quezon City Mayor Sonny Belmonte. MALACAÑANG PHOTO

'Me, no, no'

Asked whether the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (Naktaf) had helped the child's family negotiate her release, Ebdane said: "No, no, no. They have no connection. It was the safety of the victim is always the paramount concern. They cannot prevent it [the payment of ransom]."

He also noted that the abduction of the child, who was held for two weeks by suspected members of the Abu Sayyaf Group, was one of the longest kidnapping cases.

President Macapagal-Arroyo's spokesperson Ignacio Bunye told reporters at a briefing that Malacañang would not prevent the families of kidnap victims from paying ransom if they choose to do so instead of cooperating with police authorities.

4th most wanted

Bunye said the safety of the kidnap victims was of utmost concern.

It was Chief Supt. Dionisio Coloma, police director of Eastern Visayas, who announced the arrest of the fourth most wanted kidnap gang leader in the country.

Allan Bonzilla was arrested at around 12:00 p.m. yesterday at his safe house in the mountainous province of Barangay Calaochao in Capoocan, Leyte, Coloma said.

Bingan is one of only four kidnap gang leaders with a P1 million bounty on their heads. One of them, Jr. Idhon Obsio Tiga, was killed in an encounter with Lanaron on Nov. 20 in Binalbagan, Batasan.

The arrest of Bingan came a day after that of Elmer Canares, the fifth most wanted kidnapper who carried a P500,000 price on his head.

On Wednesday, acting on a tip by a Leyte resident, members of the police office in Eastern Visayas and the regional mobile group surrounded a house in Barangay Colasiao where Bingan was believed hunker up.

Coloma said Bingan' parents and local officials were not able to convince him to surrender until after noon yesterday.

Murder

Bahay chief Angelo Reyes announced the early-morning release yesterday of the child, saying that she was now with her family and that authorities were hunting her kidnappers.

But the police official who spoke on condition of anonymity said the child was released a day earlier.

The source said the kidnappers seem to have released the child as early as two weeks ago but it not been for a "blunder" committed by operatives of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces detailed to the Naktaf.

Soon after the family had paid ransom, the kidnappers decided to delay the release after discovering that bulky men had planted a transmitter in the bag containing the money, the source said.

He said the gang needed time to oust rule ground.

"In a way, the operation was bloodless," the source told the business. "Thank God [the kidnappers] still released the girl. Our prayers were answered."

The source said the kidnappers had initially demanded P20 million but later agreed to bargain with the child's parents. He said the gang realized that the family could not afford the ransom demand because it owned only a small hardware business.

He also said a member of Naktaf, identified only as Sgt. Ortiz, "traitor" went her on the trail of the kidnappers.

'Matindi'

Mayor Jesse Robredo of Naga City's reelection bid. Clint Sy in Quezon City on Nov. 17. Sy, 32, died to death from gunshot wounds while in captivity, and her body was found stuffed in a trash bag by a roadside.

In the same violent manner, the kidnappers of the 10-year-old girl shot her driver, who later died, and her nanny.

Victim's story

Interviewed yesterday by radio station dzRH, the child said her abductors left her in a vehicle where her mother found her at around 5:30 a.m. yesterday. She said her parents paid ransom.

She said she was blindfolded and her hands and feet were bound throughout her two-week ordeal. But she said she was not hurt by her abductors and was given food during meals.

The child also said that during her captivity, she was able to speak with her mother, who promised her that ransom would be paid.

Kidnap-free Christmas

In Malacañang, the President ordered Naktaf chief Reyes to commando kidnappers in police or military uniform as part of measures to achieve a kidnap-free Christmas.

"We need to demonstrate government resolve and capability to address this menace," she said, reading from a statement.

Mr. Macapagal said the involvement in kidnapping of "scalawags in uniform" was being investigated by the Naktaf, "which will undertake cleansing and isolation measures to ensure that only police officers with unquestionable integrity are assigned to anti-kidnapping operations," she said, adding:

"We need the cooperation of the Chinese-Filipino community to help us identify the stakeouts. If anyone has suspicions or proof about any cops being involved in the kidnap trade, this should be reported directly to Secretary Reyes so he can take it from there," she added.

NIEGAS: No. 4 captured in Leyte

CATAPACO: No. 1 captured in Malaban

'Report-A-Kidnapper'

At the forum, the "positive response" of the public to the "Report-A-Matrice Program" of the group Gabriela Sandie Against Corruption (CSC) but encouraged the party-list group to launch a "Report-A-Kidnapper" drive.

Gloss Rep. Liza Bernardo Lukin said the proposed campaign was conceptualized in response to the kidnapping increase.

She said the campaign would be launched in coordination with the Naktaf, Philippine National Police, National Bureau of Investigation, Department of Justice, and anti-crime groups.

She also said cash rewards would be offered for information that would lead to the arrest of kidnappers. With reports from Gil Cabacungan Jr., Cynthia D. Rabano, AP

LDP 'nominates' Lacson; that's illegal, says Angara

Front page A4

for the presidency some Dec. 15, the first day of the filing period.

"But the nomination either would constitute premature," Aquino told reporters, and unless the nominee files the two men to talk between themselves.

Factions to meet

Aquino said he planned to arrange a meeting between Angara and members of the opposing faction by next week, when Bitoja would have calmed down. "That stir would only make Mahalaxmi happy and I don't want that," he said.

Lacson's nomination at the Club Filipino in San Juan drew immediate response from Aunt Pancit Estella, chair of the committee formed last month to select the opposition's standard-bearer.

In a statement, Estella said he was quitting the post "in response to recent developments," primarily Lacson's nomination as standard-bearer by a "small splinter group" in the LDP.

"The proclamation has defied and grossly undermined the entire selection process initiated by the facilitation committee," the former senator said.

Estella said it "challenged the very essence of the committee—that of bringing together the true supporters and [paving] the way for the [opposition's] parties to develop a first-cut selection process and come up with a single candidate for next year's elections."

Ceasefire

Aquino said responses he received such his party mates who were angered over Angara's support he was in elective a ceasefire so that they would work on a dialogue.

He said the "overall plan" was for candidates to "get normal."

"It's very important that we have one slate only because if we have two candidates, we will split our support," he said. "That's not good for the candidates, and I know they know that."

Aquino said it was here that the unification efforts continue. He said he expected each of him to go on until January or February.

"We recognize if PDP's aspirations become there is a possible selection process, so here is our candidate," he said, adding that as far as the LDP was concerned, Lacson was in race for 2004.

Those present at the nomination ceremony were mainly LDP congressmen, such as Malacañang Leader Carlos Padilla and Representatives Ruben Ziggler, Abraham Mitra, Carlos Lobregat and Gilbert Remulla.

Among those who personally endorsed Lacson was former Sen. Eva Estrada Kalaw.

'Renegades'

Padilla said the LDP congressmen were there to say the party sentiments—that it was supporting Lacson for president.

He later told reporters that Lacson's nomination had the support of "99 percent" of the party.

But in a statement, the Regional Leaders of the LDP denounced the "unauthorized move of a small group of renegade LDP members" to proclaim the senator as the party's standard-bearer.

In Baguio City, Senate Minority Leader Aquino Sotto III said those opposing Roy's designation as standard-bearer were "just a few disgruntled members" of the LDP.

"There are hundreds of members, and there are only dozens who do not like how the party is run," he said.

Momentary rift

In his speech, Lacson said he was accepting the nomination to be standard-bearer of the LDP.

Speaking in Filipino, he said the rift in the party was just "momentary" because he was confident that the party would come together in the end and field a common candidate who would lead it to victory in the 2004 elections.

Lacson reiterated his program of government, including the need to stop corruption, reform the system of justice and enforce law and order.

He said he was willing to meet with the leaders concerned and settle the issue.

Lacson later told the reporters in a phone interview that in his talk with Angara on Monday night, he told the latter about his party mates' plan to nominate him as standard-bearer.

"And I got his response as pressed with the nomination," Lacson said.

He said he also got Angara's consent to file his candidacy for president on Dec. 15 if the issue of who should be standard-bearer is not resolved.

Unauthorized

But Angara insisted that Lacson's nomination was "not authorized," and that those who nominated him did not represent the party.

He issued the reminder that the LDP "spoke" the other day when it officially merged with the Partido ng Masang Pilipino and PDP-Laban.

With the merger, he said, "it's the combined opposition which's going to make the choice" of its standard-bearer, and "no longer a single party."

Asked what he would do if Lacson files his candidacy on Dec. 15, Angara said it would not have his certification if the issue of selecting the standard-bearer is not resolved.

"He would not be getting the LDP nomination," given this scenario, Angara said.

Disciplinary action

But Angara is confident that all is not lost.

Informed that his party mates wanted a dialogue with him, he said he was open to it.

"If the disgruntled group is seeking enlightenment, we'll certainly sit down with anyone who wants to talk with us," he said.

Angara said the LDP would impose disciplinary action on those behind Lacson's nomination. But for now, he said, the party was busy uniting the opposition.

He administered the oath to 10 new members of the LDP at the Senate.

The new members are from Pandacan City, Santa Rosa, Compostela Valley, Zamboanga del Norte, Laoang City, La Union and Pangasinan. With a report from Tyrael Cimatu, PhilStarNews Luzon Bureau

BUSINESS

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Gov't raises ₱31B from sale of retail treasury bonds

Peso is top gainer in Asia; 'hot money' inflow soars

See story on page B4

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE MACAPAGAL administration has raised P31 billion from the sale of three-year retail treasury bonds, a billion higher than its target and enough to allow the Bureau of Treasury to shelve the auction of government bills and bonds this month.

However, the Treasury would still auction some P6 billion to P8bn next week to banks and other institutional investors to further boost the government's cash position ahead of the relatively expensive year-end.

The Treasury also announced yesterday that it would increase to P32 billion the volume of the treasury bill auctions during the first quarter of 2004 from P9.5 billion each during the bi-monthly auctions this year. It also said it will increase to P4.5 billion from P3 billion the weekly auction size of the treasury bonds.

The political turmoil has made retail investors reluctant to buy the government's three-year bonds at a yield of 11 percent. Bankers said that local investors believed that the return was insufficient for the risks of placing money in a three-year instrument.

In July, the government sold P74.2 billion worth of T-Bills. But National Treasurer Sergio Ibilina stressed that at that time, the Treasury sold three- and five-year bonds, which en-

(CONT'D ON B2)

Republic Cement to convert ₱1.5-B loan to equity

By Doris C. Dumlao

REPUBLIC Cement Corp. is set to settle P1.5 billion worth of debts to affiliate Lafarge Holdings (Philippines) Inc., formerly Blue Circle Philippines Inc., by converting the loans into equity.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday, RCC spokesperson Si Yong Chua-Ganzon said the company's board had approved the increase in its authorized capital stock from P5 billion to P6 billion.

Out of the increased capital stock, 1.15 billion common shares will be issued to La Farge Holdings, the holder of the convertible notes issued by the company in 2000.

The convertible notes, now with a face value of P1.5 billion will be retired by swapping the loan with the newly issued 1.15 billion common shares.

The P6-billion expanded authorized capital stock will be divided into 7.99 billion **common shares** with a par value of P1 each and 215 **preferred shares, with a par value** of P100 per share. The increase in **the authorized capital still** consist of three billion common shares **with a total par value of** P3 billion.

Of the P3-billion increase in authorized capital, Champions said Southeast Asia Cement Holdings Inc. (Seaconi) subscribed to about 1.33 common shares to RCC.

At present, for the subscription, Seaconi exchanged its 19.96 million shares in PR Cement Corp. and 7.9 million common shares in Lloyds Mehold Industries Corp.

The Securities and Exchange Commission recently approved RCC's increase in authorized capital and the issuance of shares to Seaconi subject to certain conditions which are expected to be complied with the coming January.

In 2000, RCC acquired control in the Seaconi group as part of a new round of consolidation triggered by the merger of principal shareholders La Farge SA of France and Blue Circle Industries plc of the United Kingdom.

RCC and its subsidiaries have interests in four cement plants: Portland Cement in Batangas, Republic Cement in Bulacan as well as Eagle Cement and Mindanao Portland in Misamis.

In the first nine months of this year, RCC's net loss widened to P389 million from P82 million a year ago due to the decline in its selling prices. Average prices fell by 11 percent resulting in a P1.23-billion decline in total revenue despite the 9-percent rise in volume.

Gov't raises . . .

From page B1

pleased the higher volume.

He pointed out that the government had originally planned to sell only P30 billion worth of RTBs this year.

But even during the auction of the three-year RTBs last week, the Treasury ended up selling only P13.36 billion against a target of P5 billion due to the expensive bids, although sellers received P8.76 billion.

"Nobody wanted to lend for three years at a rate that has not increased in the possibility that (Senior Fernando Ver Jr.) would win and become President," said a senior bond dealer.

Sold in runs of P5,000, a retail investor can buy the risk-free bonds with a minimum of P5,000 but not more than P1 million. The investors would be paid every quarter and like any other government debt papers, the RTBs would be subject to a final withholding tax and documentary stamp tax.

DISCLOSURES

ACSTC of Investments Inc. announced the appointment of Cecilio Ruidera as vice president of human resources.

* * *

ROBITC Cecilio was elected for the first time as director of Philippine Telegraph and Telephone Corp. Other than Mr. Robitcio, shares the holds no other share in the company. The company also disclosed that Pamela Sano, vice president of budget and corporate planning has 6,000 PTT shares.

* * *

PHIBE Gaming Philippines Inc. bought 474,912 of its own shares at P125 per share.

* * *

PEI Leasing and Finance Inc. bought 1 million of its own shares at P1.32 per share.

* * *

ELECTED officers of Power Holdings Inc. were Pedro Roxas, chair and CEO; Miguel Ramon, president and COO; Ramon Principe, Jr., CFO; appointees Asuncion Aquino, SVP-finance and CFO and Heinrich Wahlang, Jr., VP-legal and-secretary.

* * *

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Commission approved Republic Cement Corp.'s increase in its authorized capital stock from P5 billion to P6 billion. *Compiled by Marissa C. Salanga, PID Intern*

Communication breakdown

THE PHILIPPINE Bank of Communications is sending out its controlling shareholder confidences on the controversies Chinoy bank.

But it seems the three major shareholders first need to regain the trust of their hard-pressed bank president.

According to the grapevine, PBCom president Isidro Montoya Jr. has already accepted an invitation from Ambassador Alfonso Yuchengco to move over and become president of Rizal Commercial Banking Corp.

However, according to another account, the relentless Montoya travels has been cancelled after one of the Lees, the biggest of the three shareholding families in PBCom, called up Mr. JC Wee would have Lee possibly told the tycoon for the latter to change his mind?

Montoya was supposed to have expressed surprise when asked by a colleague about his alleged plan to transfer to PCIBC.

In any case, what may be gleaned from the above accounts is that Montoya himself is seriously considering other options, especially now that his three-year contract with PBCom is nearly over.

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

Already, two senior officers brought in by Montoya when he joined PBCom in 2000 have recently resigned—Evangeline Sicangco, senior vice president for operations and information technology, and Armando Velasquez, first vice president for credit management and asset recovery.

The additional loss of its remaining president could push back efforts to bring up PBCom's capital ratios to Bangko Sentral standards, especially when the three major shareholders themselves could not decide where the additional capital would come from themselves, Inquirer.com-ite, or the Bangko Sentral PDIC coalition.

In an attempt to calm back the worst and the feeding frenzy about the bank's capital loss yesterday, Jose Fit. Alcantara had a disingenuous way of answering his detractors.

The ex-Citibanker said that the PBCom shareholders would pump in an additional P1 billion, without explaining that the PBCom plan to seek re-capitalization funding from Bangko Sentral PDIC entailed the PBCom shareholders them-

CONTINUED ON

Stocks . . .

From page B-1

A second trader said market players were also worried by news that actor Fernando Poe Jr., who announced last week that he will challenge Mr. Macapagal in next May's election, topped the latest opinion poll released on Wednesday.

"You know the business sector is wary of him. The market just reacted again," said the stock broker who asked not to be identified.

Alfa Capital's Viesca said he expects some bullishness through selling to persist on today "We see a modest decline. We still see the next psychological support level at 1,388," he said.

Reuters

Peso is top gainer in Asia; 'hot money' inflow soars

By Clarissa S. Batino

AT&R: PESO sustained its run-up for the fourth straight day and closed at 55.273-to-$1 from 55.38 the previous day, making it the top gainer among Asian currencies yesterday.

At the same time, portfolio investments netted $147.3 million in November, its highest monthly level for the year, bringing the total net inflow for the year to $623.5 million, up by 226 percent from $191.7 million a year ago.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura credited the strong inflow from overseas Filipino workers' remittances and increasing export receipts for the continued interest of the peso.

"The political noise has abated. And even the period when it was volatile, however, was opportunity to buy quite heavy for investments in the local market where higher returns were offered in fixe-income debt papers," the BSP chief said.

The peso opened at 55.35 to-a-dollar and strengthened to 55.26 before closing at 55.273. Turnover reached only $116 million in quiet trading that saw no buying pressure seen from the BSP.

Businessmen said the local currency should continue to firm up to the 55-to-$1 level this month. But the peso remained the top loser on a year-to-date basis after having shed 3 percent of its value since the start of 2003.

The BSP said that in November, investments in equities totaled $80.2 million while placements in government securities and money market instruments stood at $340.5 million. Bank deposits of foreign portfolio investors reached $430 million.

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Forex reserves hit $16.8B in November

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE PHILIPPINES' dollar reserves remained at a comfortable $16.8 billion as of end-November, only slightly down from the previous month's $16.89 billion as the government disbursed with the central bank the $300-million proceeds of a bond issue last month to settle some debts.

With the healthy reserves level, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas is looking to reduce the country's balance-of-payments deficit to only about $600 million from an original target of $1.15 billion this year.

The GIR would also support the sustained recovery of the peso, which closed at 55.273 to a dollar yesterday from 55.38 last Wednesday.

The October GIR was the highest level this year following the proceeds of the national government's $1.05-billion bond flote and the BSP's $500-million bond.

The national government had pre-funded $1.05 billion of its $1.8 billion financing requirement in 2004 while the BSP used $115 million of the loan proceeds to pay obligations that fell due in October.

The BSP chief said the GIR should stay within $15 billion by the end of the year even in repayments of maturing obligations would continue that month.

The latest reserves level of reserves is enough to pay for 4.7 months' worth of imports and is equivalent to 2.9 times the level of the country's short-term debt based on original maturity and 1.9 times based on residual maturity.

Considered stately of 15 dollars, the GIR is the total foreign currency holdings of the central bank including gold and special drawing rights, the currency used by the International Monetary Fund.

The central bank sometimes dips into its dollar reserves to intervene in the market and strengthen the peso. The BSP also extends loans to banks using its GIR and, at times, borrows from banks when the need arises.

The country's dollar reserves rose to an all-time high of $17.25 billion in March 2002 mainly due to a $1-billion inflow from the national government's bond issue.

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MECHANICS

SWEDTRON

Cocktales

(Turn page B5)

selves parking in P1 billion to match the planned P9-billion infusion from the government somehow.

The surprise, and sudden bidding of a press conference of media newsie Lucio Tan to announce that allied Bank would make good any and all P8Gsis checks brought temporary relief from the new jittery Records collegiate.

So not be surprised if the cohorts and stellar Cyrosis eventually ends up with calling PR-Com, along with Allied Bank and Philippine National Bank.

And if that happens, others will that leave the PR8Com shareholder and Tan competitor's Change of La Gasser!

Museum pieces

GOOK icon Gary Lewis and the Playboys was supposed to hold a concert tonight at the Music Museum in Greenhills and tomorrow night, with BJ and Friends, at the Hard Rock Cafe in Glorietta.

The local tour was, however, cancelled after Lewis developed cold feet upon reading the US government's no-no alert on the Philippines.

As a result of the cancellation, concert organizers had to lill bank on local artists such as Hotdogs, Boyfriends, BJ and Friends, and Billie Idjanzeneza to push the show tonight at the 10-unit Museum Cafe (Hard Rock Cafe, as was reported here Wednesday.)

Saipan sallies

THE BAPAY government will start luring Philippine tourists away from RP up resorts-directed to Commonwealth-North Center.

The deployment of Pinoy nurses, the final details of which are now being hammered by Saipan with the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, will come amid the impending takeover of the island's telephone franchise from Wolcon by the Delgados of Indonesia.

The island is now conducting public hearings on the Delgados' acquisition of the Verizon operations, after the Filipino group has successfully battled Washington and other federal concerns.

Despite help from Wolcon, it took the Delgados two years of lobbying, legal spadework, and hearings—sounds just like the Philippines—before their group, Nesiba Telecom, could obtain federal approval.

Heard through the grapevine

THOSE years after they shot into the limelight, the controversial Stop amusements in Vermont Park subdivision along the Macos Highway have finally been finished and launched during the weekend.

Stopes' interest had to be born outsiders and mostly driven by curiosity.

(Cocktales may be reached by e-mail at cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com or at cocktales_pdi@hotmail.com.)

Taiwan keen on bilateral trade deal with RP

By Mathalie V. Rueca

THE TAIWANESE government has expressed keen interest in forging a bilateral free trade agreement with the Philippines.

Taiwan Minister Yi-Fu Lin, in speech during the RDC-BF Joint Economic Conference held in the country last week, said an FTA between the Philippines and Taiwan will boost each other's trade as there are many potential areas for cooperation.

Lin added that an FTA between the Philippines and Taiwan would further increase the estimated $3 billion in investments that Taiwanese companies have already invested here as of September 2004.

The Philippines has emerged as the top investment site in Southeast Asia by Taiwanese businessmen.

Businessmen include Formosa Plastic Corp.'s 186-megawatt co-generation plant; Hu Hang Construction Co. Ltd.'s low-cost housing project; Gate Bird Machinery Co. Ltd.'s auto parts project; Tatung MRK Co. Ltd.'s air conditioners manufacturing facility and Bel Chun Co. Ltd.'s wooden bunk bed factory.

Formal negotiations on the proposed FTA between the Philippines and Taiwan never held last week during the economic conference.

The conference also covered discussions on how to further develop the small and medium enterprises and the enhancement of the two countries' food industries.

Lin also said that Taiwanese firms have eyed the potential of the labor-quality-wise Philippines to move the domestic of Taiwanese businesses that might set up shop in the country, particularly in the IT sector.

Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II said the country could expect some 35,000 additional jobs in the Information technology and related sectors over the next 12 months as more foreign firms in need of IT services here expressed interests to tap Filipino companies.

Lin also said the Taiwanese government has agreed with the proposal of Trade and Industry Undersecretary Thomas Aquino to hold annual bilateral talks to address changing trends in trade.

President Macapagal Arroyo, addressing members of the business community during the recently concluded Philippine Business Conference, said the government was opening the country's doors to more bilateral trade deals to increase local firms' access to foreign markets.

The President said it was important for the Philippines to forge bilateral deals, especially as discussions on multilateral trade have been hampered by the recent collapse of World Trade Organization's Cancun round of talks.

October export receipts up 6.2% to $3.22B

By Doris C. Dumlao

PHILIPPINE export earnings rose by 6.2 percent in October to $3.22 billion from a year ago, on the modest growth in the shipments of electronics products helped maintain the export sector's recovery that started in September.

The National Statistics Office yesterday reported that in the first 10 months of the year, foreign exchange earnings from merchandise exports increased by 1 percent to $29.49 billion over last year. This, however, was still short of the government's export growth target of 3 percent for the year.

The year-on-year growth in exports receipts in October was higher than the 2.3 percent registered in September, when the sector recovered from a two-month slump. It is also the country's strongest export performance since March this year when year-on-year receipts jumped by 8.6 percent.

While the country's exports to top trading partner United States continued its slow climb, sales to the Netherlands, Germany and Asian countries such as Japan, Hong Kong, China, Singapore, Taiwan, Malaysia and Korea registered increases.

ABN Capital Securities economist Jose Patron said the Philippines was still not fully benefiting from the recovery in the global economy because exports to the US was still sluggish.

"The good news is that we're selling more to alternative markets. Once we start reaping the fruits of the recovery in the US, growth in exports will be more exciting," Patron said.

Next year, Patron said the country's export earnings would likely grow by more than 10 percent due to the pick-up in sales to alternative markets, the recovery in the US and the effects of a lower 2000 base for comparison.

Japan accounted for 16.1 percent of the total exports in October, rising by 16.6 percent or $519.49 million from the year-ago level.

The US took up 16.2 percent of the total value lost in imports from the Philippines during the month dropped by 23.2 percent or $511.64 million year on year.

Exports of manufactured goods accounted for 88.5 percent of total shipments, gaining by 5.8 percent.

Export receipts from agro-based products such as coconut oil and bananas, which accounted for 4.7 percent of the total, likewise increased by 7.6 percent.

Electronic products, the biggest dollar earner among manufactured goods, registered a 4.1 percent increase from year ago and amounted for $2.21 billion or 68.5 percent of the country's total exports during the period. Semiconductor exports jumped to $1.34 billion or 5.4 percent better than last year's level.

Other merchandise exports for October and their contributions were: apparel and clothing accessories ($133.3 million); furniture and fixtures ($127.22 million); and other products manufactured from materials imported on consignment basis ($59.39 million).

ABS-CBN: Serving Filipino children via educational entertainment

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

PARENTS have always been concerned about their children watching too much television. But since they still watch television anyway, why not make some good use of it.

ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp., through its social arm ABS-CBN Foundation, did just that when it launched its Educational Television (ETV) shows in 1994, which focused mainly on helping public elementary schools gain access to state-of-the-art educational programs.

Through ETV, the foundation promotes the concept of television-assisted instruction through programs such as Sineskwela, Math-Tinik and Pahina.

Sineskwela was developed to help enhance learning in 1994. This was followed by the pilot episode of Math Tinik in 1997 to promote math education. Pahina is a supplementary and remedial reading program for teaching Philippine literature.

Educational shows

ABS-CBN Foundation managing director Gilda L. Lopez said the objective is to help public school teachers in educating children through these educational materials, using television as a medium.

Lopez said she was part of the broadcasting giant's commitment to serve the Filipino children through values education and competence and individual development when she partnered with the foundation by accepting the ETV reins, including television receivers and VHS players for their shows public schools.

CORPORATE CITIZEN

As of the end of last year, ETV enhancement has been installed in close to 5,000 schools nationwide, giving access to more than 6 million students. At least another 1,000 schools will be added to the list this year.

Spreading reach

The vision, Lopez said, is to bring ETV to all 15,000 public schools nationwide. She said this was why ABS-CBN Foundation had tapped local governments units and non-profit organizations to spread the reach of ETV.

Lopez said investing in ETV is worthwhile because different studies have proven that children learn a lot from the ETV programs.

A February 2001 study by Ustara Primus concluded that students exposed to ETV shows learned more things and did better in school than those who did not have access to ETV shows.

A regional ETV impact study done in February 2000 showed that children exposed to Sineskwela and Math-Tinik performed significantly higher test scores compared with those who were not.

A specific study on Math-Tinik conducted in 2000 showed that the program was successful in making the students in the primary level appreciate Math more. There was a noted increase in class participation, attentiveness and self-confidence. Math-Tinik likewise developed the children's flair of Math as applied to everyday life.

"All the studies show that ABS-CBN Foundation and its ETV shows have made a difference in the lives of Filipino children. (The foundation) was not only able to provide entertaining and quality television shows, it also served a positive chord to the country's (educational system)," Lopez said.

The basic package costs P85,200, which includes eight copies of Sineskwela, 13 copies of Sineskwela, 13 copies of Pilipinohanan, 10 copies of Math-Tinik and 12 copies of Epok-Epok. The cost of the comprehensive package goes up to P441,600 for 115 copies.

The ETV infrastructure also includes a 21" colored TV that sells for about P11,600 and a VHS player worth P4,500.

The program also comes with teachers' training for ETV utilization in schools. ABS-CBN has so far conducted IT training sessions in Laguna, Benguet, Iloilo, Negros, Cagayan, Marbara, Bulacan, Iligan, Pampanga, Aklan, Legazpi City, Cebu City and Zamboanga. About 800 teachers have been trained so far.

Lopez said the cost was a small price to pay considering the effects of educational programs on children, especially those in public schools.

Children, nature oriented

ABS-CBN Foundation, she said, would do its part by continuing to develop innovative and interesting programs to appeal to the children, for this way, learning and television can be combined for a common cause.

The ETV is just one of ABS-CBN's projects for children. The others include the Bantay Bata 163, which champions the cause of victims of child abuse and the Child Health Village. It also has a Children's Center, which offers classes in Filipino, Basic 1-3 and Prep.

ABS-CBN Foundation is also heavily involved in environment protection programs such as Bantay Tubig, a campaign to promote clean-up drive for the Ugong Malinta Wetland Project, Bantay Kalikasan, an information environment show which highlights environmental protection stories and Bantay Paaralan, a project to dispose of used oil and industrial wastewater.

Lopez said these programs have one objective in mind, and that is to serve, as ABS-CBN's slogan says, "for the Service of the Filipino."

CHILDREN exposed to educational television shows produced by ABS-CBN Foundation Inc. have performed better in school.

Negotiation, preemption in fisheries sector

By Ernesto M. Ordoñez

"If I must practice what my words, especially in an area where our country led the way, in fisheries, as energized with the position President Fidel V. Ramos advocated during the 1996 Asia Pacific Economic Council (APEC) held in the Philippines. During that year, President Ramos championed the position of the private sector, particularly the people's organizations (POs) and the nongovernment organizations (NGOs). This was to explore trade liberalization with sustainable development in Agro's main goal. In areas where trade liberalization could go against sustainable development, the liberalization would have to be modified.

At the Fisheries Conference last month, Angel Gonzalez, echoed the same sentiment in Bombay. Speaking before conference participants—which included trade negotiators from the United States, the European Union and Japan, as well as representatives from the Asian countries—Gonzalez said, "The post Cancún trade position of the Philippine government is weak because it is already exempted to the comprehensive application of tariffs on all (organic) fishery products despite the negative effects of such a policy on local agriculture products. It does not seem to have learned its lessons well."

However, Ulandi is hopeful that our government will consider the changes discussed in last month's conference that will focus on sustainable development, rather than trade liberalization, as the main goal for the 2005 WTO fishery negotiations in Hongkong.

Non-agriculture market access

At present, trade negotiations on fishery products are included in the Non-Agriculture Market Access (Nama) group of the World Trade Organization (WTO). It is argued that fishery products are treated in this group as if they were like cars or large consumers.

The problem with placing fisheries in Nama is that the inappropriate trade liberalization, which often aims to maximize production, will run counter to the sustainability objective of a biological resource like fish.

Instead of just growing the most output, fishery production should be based on the maximum sustainability and carrying capacity values of the fishery stocks and the resource base. This is consistent with the "precautionary approach" which was adopted in recent years by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. The FAO favors restrictions on current fisheries production because these are biological and environmental limits on the capacity of fishery resources to grow and regenerate.

Because fisheries is really akin to agriculture which has a very different paradigm from industry, we should work for this sector to be outside the Nama group but the industry paradigm's emphasis on trade liberalization and maximum production amongst the very important fisheries goal of sustainable development.

'Friends of Fish'

Right now, we are members of a group of countries within the WTO called the "Friends of Fish." Most of the members of this group are developed nations. They favor the phasing out of subsidies because economically, according to them, results in overcapacity and over-fishing.

This is true for developed countries. However, as a developing nation, our over-fishing is caused, not by subsidies, but by an open-access situation. This allows almost unregulated exploitation of our fishery resources. What we need to be globally competitive is not only a vastly improved regulatory environment, but also a "good" subsidy that will promote activities such as research, training, and community-based resource management systems.

According to Ulandi, the Friends of Fish members do not differentiate between the "good" subsidies (that promote sustainability) and the "bad" subsidies that contribute to overfishing. When members of the Friends of Fish go against fishery subsidies, the good subsidies that our country needs for sustainable development might also be eliminated.

Since developing countries are allotted different treatment from developed countries, we should do nothing (long what we did in Cancún.

Agriculture Secretary Leo Leviste and Agriculture Assistant Secretary Ingrid Sevilla-Sicam should be commended for taking the lead in the formation of "the Group of 20." This group of nations successfully resisted the unfair demands of some developed countries that would have endangered our sustainable development.

Similarly we should align with similar developing nations to ensure that sustainable development takes precedence over trade liberalization in our 2005 Hong Kong fishery trade negotiations. We should not allow ourselves to be "Friends of Fish" to preempt our negotiating position.

Conclusion

At the end of last month's fisheries conference, the participants issued a press statement calling on the Asian national governments "to stand up to the rigged rules and unfair practices of the World Trade Organization, and work toward more equitable global trade rules."

We hope that our government continues the good trend they started in Cancun by setting themselves aside as the nation's environmental conscience for sustainable development. This will be critical for the success of our WTO fishery negotiations in 2005.

(The author is chair of Agrewatch, a private sector initiative, former undersecretary of agriculture and trade and industry, and former chair and active secretary for Presidential Flagship Programs and Projects. For inquiries or suggestions, e-mail agrewatch@yahoo.com or telefax 02.8536631.)

COMMENTARY

Mobile phone subscribers seen hitting 30M in 2007

By Abigail L. Ho

THE COMPANY'S wireless telephone penetration rate is expected to reach 40 percent of the population by 2007, which means there will be more than 30 million cellular subscribers by then.

Lance Gokongwei, president and chief executive of Digital Telecommunications Phil. Inc., said in an interview that with cellular service providers constantly coming up with innovations to lure potential subscribers, the local wireless subscriber base would continue to expand.

By the end of the year, he said, the country should have around 22 million cellular subscribers.

"We expect that with the cost of network expansion and the innovations initiated by wireless services, wireless penetration has a capability of achieving 40 percent by 2007, or 30 million subscribers," he said.

As of end-October, cellular giant Smart Communications Inc. already has more than 12 million subscribers, including the global unique for mobile communications (GSM) subscribers of Pilipino Telephone Corp.'s Talk 'N' Text brand. The combined subscribers of Smart and Talk n' Text account for about 58 percent of the cellular market.

Ayala-led Globe Telecom Inc. has 6.1 million subscribers as of end-September, including the prepaid GSM subscribers of subsidiary Innove Communications Inc.'s Touch Mobile.

While the host of the incumbent players seems intimidating, Digital subsidiary Digitel Mobile continued to play catch-up, reporting 600,000 subscribers as of end-October.

Gokongwei expressed optimism that Digitel Mobile's Sun Cellular brand could eventually become a strong No. 3 in the market.

Analysts and industry players earlier projected that wireless penetration rate would hit 20 percent by 2003 but, based on current trends, this target would be attained by end of this year.

As of the end of the third quarter, wireless penetration rate already stood at nearly 25 percent. With the Christmas gift-giving season, subscriber take-up will likely pick up even more in the fourth quarter.

VMC starts paying creditors

VICTORIAS Milling Co. Inc. has started paying the interest on its bank loans to 26 commercial banks, amounting to P82.7 million which is falling due this month.

The VMC said in a statement, was in accordance with the terms and conditions of the debt restructuring agreement under the rehabilitation plan approved by the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The crop year marked the beginning of the implementation of VMC's 15-year rehabilitation plan. The interest paid recently was for the first time that the creditor banks received a payment from VMC since 1997.

Crop Year 2002-2003 showed a record production of 9.461 million bags of raw sugar and 144,410 metric tons of molasses. Refined sugar production was lower at 6.3 million bags last year versus the previous year's volume of about 6.44 million but cash generation was greater due to higher margins.

The company generated P516 million in earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA) last crop year as against the previous year's P467 million, given a smaller regular workforce of 1,516 compared with 1,973 in 2001-2002.

In the meantime, the VMC mills revealed for the first time the combined daily cane capacity of 11,000 tons of cane with a second of 15,474 tons of cane which was the result of continuous improvements in the plants.

VMC is embarking on a P516-million expansion program involving a larger boiling house capacity, energy efficiency improvements, refinery upgrade and a new 25-megawatt power plant which will be capable to selling excess capacity to the Visayas grid.

Last crop year, VMC consumed 25 percent of the 15.4 million tons of sugarcane grown in Negros Occidental.

Its raw and refined sugar production accounts for about 33 percent and 38 percent of total national production, respectively.

FPHC settles today P280M worth of long-term IOUs

By Elena R. Torrijos

DIVIDENDS from subsidiary First Depression Building Corp. has generated partially listed First Philippine Holdings Corp.—the holding company for the Lopez family's power and infrastructure interests—the cash to pay P280 million in maturing long-term commercial papers.

The amount formed part of FPHC's P800 million worth of CPs the company earlier issued.

An offshoot of the Lopez group said FPHC paid on Nov. 10 the first tranche of the CPs amounting to P280 million with the dividends it received during the period.

The second tranche, worth another P280 million, falls due today and will be paid today.

The third tranche of the CPs, equivalent to P240 million will fall due on Jan. 28 next year.

In the meantime, an official of Philippine Racing Services Corp. yesterday said the company had no plan to upgrade or develop the P980 Bay resting on the holding firm's 12.02% as though the first tranche had been settled and it appeared that the second tranche would be paid as well.

PRS that is defined as "market highly protected are poorly covered, with interest payments and the principal security appear adequate for the present but certain elements may be lacking or characteristically unreliable over any great length of time..."

Questions have arisen whether FPHC will be able to pay its maturing IOUs were raised amidst of this post after the company was able to only partly pay a P30 million maturing last. FPHC subsequently paid the obligation after tapping P30 million in proceeds 2011 to ADC31d.

FPHC also gained P320 million from the sale of its indirect interests in Panay Power Corp.

In the first nine months of this year, FPHC reported a 126-percent increase in profit to P3.3 billion against the comparative figure the year before on the back of the asset sale and higher profits of operating units, particularly those involved in power generation.

From Christmas Rush to Gold Rush

THE YULETIDE season is just around the corner and the Christmas rush is starting to gain momentum. Holiday jingles and Christmas carols play continuously on the radio while traffic is seen everywhere. Frantic holiday shoppers cross into malls, department stores and supermarkets searching for gifts to suit every name on their Christmas lists.

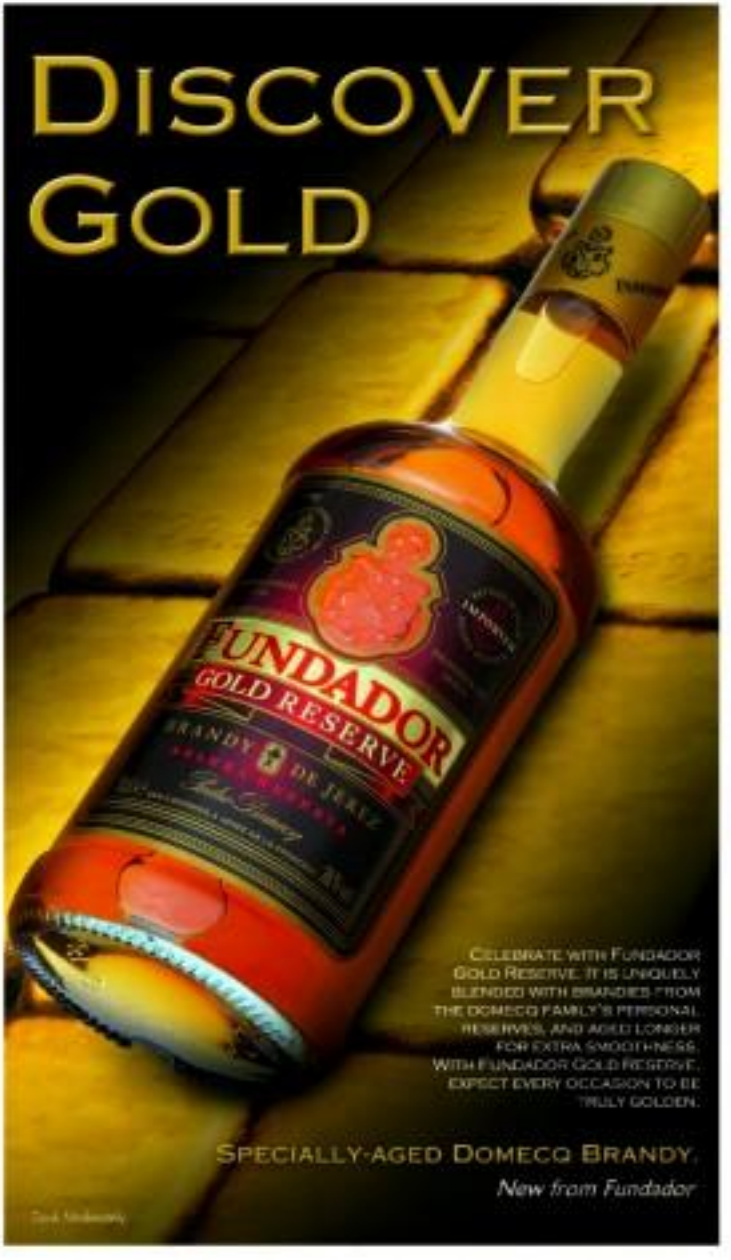
But there are bound to be special people in your own gift list for whom an ordinary present just wouldn't do. He could be your boss, your dad, or even your best friend. Gifts for these select individuals should reflect the respect and admiration you have for them.

Look no further for that special gift. Fundador Gold Reserve, the Specially-Aged Domecq Brandy, is the ideal gift to give this Holiday season. It's the perfect choice especially for those individuals who seem to have everything. The smooth, unique and unique flavor of Fundador Gold Reserve is surely welcome to anyone who receives it.

Distilled from the finest Spanish grapes, and blended with brandies from the personal reserves of Don Fabrina Domecq, Fundador Gold Reserve will surely satisfy even the most discriminating brandy connoisseurs. Just like the precious metal it is named after, Fundador Gold Reserve is a prized treasure that is sure to be appreciated by anyone who enjoys the finer things in life.

Indeed, Fundador Gold Reserve stands out from other spirits on the shelves with its attractive gift box. The bottle inside the box reveals an inviting golden amber color. It is a premium spirit that carries the same Fundador heritage and tradition of quality. Because it is a Solera Reserve Brandy, aged longer than regular brandy, Fundador Gold Reserve leaves a pleasurable lingering aftertaste that is sure to remain in the palate and in the memories of the person you're giving it to.

So in this hectic holiday season, don't just go with the usual Christmas rush, go with the Gold Rush instead. The search for that special gift is over. Give Fundador Gold Reserve and share an extraordinary brandy experience with extra-ordinary people.



Electricity shortage a growing concern

By Ronnel W. Domingo

A GROUP of energy experts and industry leaders said the severity of electricity supply had become a big issue not only in the Philippines but also in major economies.

Peter Garrucho, chair of the Energy Council of the Philippines, the local unit of the World Energy Council, said in a briefing that economic an supply security were raised following the spate of blackouts in Eastern North America, Europe and Japan.

In October, a wide area that straddled parts of the Eastern United States and Canada suffered a 48-hour blackout that cost billions of dollars in losses to governments and businesses.

Shortly after, similar problems occurred in Italy and Japan, which were initially blamed on faults in the power transmission systems.

"These blackouts have (shown) that the problem is not just making electricity affordable and accessible. Security of supply is also a major concern," Garrucho said.

The ECP is hosting a regional meeting of WEC members, which will be concluded today.

"On the local situation I we have known that a supply shortage is coming but it is only now that we are talking about solutions, which are quite late in this time," Garrucho said.

The ECP chief, who is also president of First Generation Holdings Corp., said the lack of power generation investment over the past (three years meant that the country would again suffer from a severe power shortage.

"This is troublesome in that a project takes about two or three years to complete (over the (time of financial closure," Garrucho explained.

In the same briefing, ECP secretary general Francisco L. Viray said the country would again be forced to adopt the same quick fix solutions that were taken to address the power crisis in the early 1990s.

Brisk sale of jackets, blankets as cold spell hits Baguio City

BAGUIO CITY—Sidewalk vendors are making money because of the cool weather.

Sales of jackets and sweatshirts in various malls and shop-a-key malls have been brisk as the temperature continued to drop in this mountain resort city.

On Monday, the Mercury fell to 10.6-degrees Celsius, the coldest since March 12 this year.

A celebrity in one of the signature shops here said residents and tourists had been buying jackets of all sizes and sizes since Sunday when the temperature went down to 13.8-degrees.

A Mirabasan trader on Session Road, the city's main thoroughfare, said people had been buying thick blankets to keep them warm during cold nights. The shopper blanket sold in her store cost P350.

Owners of sorgesgan or shop-shop stalls are also earning extra profit in this cold season.

When the Inquirer visited a sorgesgan owner near Burnham Park on Wednesday, several women who were mainly office workers, haggled for the best price for sweaters, jackets and sweatshirts.

Second hand jackets were selling at P300, while sweaters were selling at P80-P150, depending on the brand and style.

Sidewalk vendors are also happy with their earnings because their socks, hankers and gloves are selling like hotcakes.

Players participating in this year's 58-day gold architectural here had difficulty teeing off when the Mercury suddenly dropped to 10.6 degrees Celsius.

The weather bureau here said Sunday's temperature of 10.8 degrees was the third coldest this year. The Mercury plunged 8 degrees on Jan. 16 while it hit 9.6 degrees on March 12.

Sweaters-and-scarves were released by the abrupt change of weather as they had experienced warm mornings since last week. The city's normal temperature registers between 15-and 23-degrees Celsius.

Weather observer Wilson Lasanda said that of the drop to the northeast monsoon (amihan) season, which the country experiences from October to March. Gabbeh Mendo with a report from Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Trend Spotting LIFESTYLE

From 'ukay-ukay' to 'ukay-okay'

LIFE-STYLE

Thelma Sioson San Juan

Cool, hip Baguio yielded good finds

WEEK. What an Ad Congress week that was in Baguio. From Wednesday onwards you felt a frantic migration of men in advertising, media, creative and client-biz people and students flocked to the mountain city where, come to think of it, it didn't even get to feel cold or nippy. It very well climbs on such occasions. Baguio just did.

We had never seen so much and such variety of hustle and bustle in Baguio. An estimated 5,000 people were at the Camp John Hay Convention Center by Saturday. Dinners and parties went on the whole night from the center itself to various other venues around Baguio, including street and al-fresco pigs. People were still out on the street as late as 4 a.m.

There was even a mountain bike race which MIS-CBN Publishing president Ernie Lopez went after he accidentally joined it. He was biking on the first morning of the Ad Congress and was just flagged to join the morning column.

Meedo's put up to own place just for the Ad Congress, with guest artists. We top him: Richard Meedo and wife Rosie at the Country Club.

Camp John Hay Manor, of course, was where the action was, its cozy interior of wood and open concrete letting in warmth against the incredibly big crowd. By the way, this is at no *that* Billy King's now home, his cousin being one of the Manor's owner-ons.

City of cool

Evenings in Baguio, by the, have become synonymous to boiled bistu, where chef Paul Publador convinces to draw diners to the lucrative on cougar or lamb leg stew or crispy fried tofu and a surprise stew and then. (Liz changes the menu now and then.) Dad and wife Nina Carbonell Stotz, Pauls Dionisio, arrivals by pot luck surprise on the '50s fortyishow have raised good dining to the level of cool for the oldest stop around). After dinner, their friends show up and turn the digs into a hip, tea w/ friend bar.

Saturday dinner and saturday nights, it took us hours to drive from Baguio Country Club to John Hay since traffic was a crawl.

If John Hay and Country Club were parked, you could not imagine Session Road, which has always been to begin with. She never bores (Ruby Pick).

Having one of the biggest window pop. shoppin in the country and being the venue of a power and high profile event like the Ad Congress, Baguio definitely is no longer the pine-scented Baguio of your childhood. It is breathing diesel fumes; Session Road is like Cubao at rush hour, minus the Cubaonon.

We couldn't even see the real Burnham Park behind the phalanx of parked jeepneys in Baguio Country Club, they were installing a giant pine Christmas tree, leaf by leaf—a fake pine tree in Baguio?

Yes it was obvious people, across ages and classes, continue to be drawn to Baguio. It's as if each visitor reinvents the city's charm to suit his or her speech, be it romance or vocation. You could smell the scent of pine if you squeezed it hard enough.

But while Baguio has an intrinsic charm, city officials must really try to save it from decay and runaway urbanization. Its native must be decongested. Session Road can take only so much vehicular and human traffic.

Fil-Estate's chair Bob Sobrepeña of Camp John Hay Development, I remember, once broached the idea of closing Session to vehicular traffic and letting the tricycle run the route, like in Intramuros. An ecology-based

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WHITE georgette top paired with beige crepe pants

Boyet Fajardo of Robinsons targets plus-size women, endowing their well-endowed figures with style

WHITE linen top with embroidery paired with black crepe pants

MICHELLE Bacchetta in a white linen top paired with chiffon blue pants

A plus for fashion

TRIGYED new blouses combined with solid-colored inner top and pants

Text by Ramona C. Burgos
Photos by Rudy Espiritu

DESIREE Ma'dalen's Abaca-ish woven an angel-sleeved blouse and asymmetric printed chiffon skirt.

GEOMETRICAL printed lace blouse paired with brown inner top and pants.

WE'LL condemned to clothes that were baggy, drab and dull, today's plus-size customer has a much wider variety of choices than ever before. Specialty chains have made a particular effort to develop more stylish creations that will appeal to the hefty and the not so average in size.

The new trend owes to plus-size exhibitions such as Queen Latifah, Oprah Winfrey, Rosie O'Donnell and Kathy Bates and fashion models Emme and Christine Alt, who have gained attention not only for their professional accomplishment but for their personal style as well.

"Every woman deserves the opportunity to dress in style, regardless of her size, and at a price she can afford," says Boyet Fajardo, who has been devoted to the rapidly expanding market for plus-size fashion since 1993. His creations, which carry the labels "Boyet Fajardo" for the plus-size and "Fabiola" for the slim and younger women, are available at all Robinsons Department Store outlets.

Blouses have a price range of P299-699, while the high-end collection ranges from P1,500 to P2,990.

The Boyet Fajardo line features a whole range of options for the full-figured woman, from daily wear to party wear, semi-formal clothes and cocktail wear. The fabrics are gorgeous: chiffon, silk, crepe, linen and lycra, which are imported from Korea, Hong Kong, Jakarta and Bangkok.

"Boyet Fajardo caters specifically to those whose bust/chest size is 42" and above, waistlines are 36"," says Fajardo who believes that style does not have to be sacrificed when dressing full-figured women. "For them, options are very limited. So I've introduced innovations in my designs."

The new are asymmetrical, geometrical and flowing, Fajardo explains. They have deep necklines so women can flaunt the upper part of their body. "My designs have a free-wearing effect which tends to deflatulate the eye."

For his holiday collection, he features solid colors, a lot of geometric and floral prints. "But there are limitations," he points out. "A big floral print at the upper part of a blouse is a no-no for this will make a woman look bigger. It should be placed at the skirt's borders and coordinate with the top. For short, plump women, I recommend shirts, a simple neck dress and skirts whose lengths are above the knee."

Growing market

Historically, the industry has been very slow to address the needs of full-figured women, Fajardo notes. "Recently, that has begun to change, and a major reason is because the size and strength of this market simply cannot longer be overlooked."

High fashion may continue to be the realm of the skinny, he adds, but fashion rules have been flat, while rules of plus-size styles are growing.

"Most retailers today realize that the plus-size customer has been underserved, not only in terms of places to shop but also style and the trends available. This is why Robinsons has been providing a shopping environment that affirms the worth of its plus-size customers," he says.

Indeed, women are sick of the stigma of not being able to fit a supermodel paradigm that seems to ignore the very existence of real-size women in the real world. It is in this light that Fajardo has been targeting fashion forward women who are looking for clothes that create a more personal expression of style with emphasis on comfort, fit and detail.

"Plus-size doesn't mean that everyone has the same dimensions," Fajardo says. "Customers have to fit the body and be flattering as well as comfortable."

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From 'ukay-ukay' to 'ukay-okay'

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city plan is definitely a eyeing trend.

It's a plan that must carry Baguio into the progressive and lucrative future while conserving its unique resources. If Thailand's Chiang Mai—which is like Baguio in landscape and even in cycle—could do it, why not our own mountain city? Enhance its quality of life while still making it attractive to both tourists and migrant student population.

New mall

If one needed a reminder that Baguio's face is changing, one must only look at the new SM Mall, which has risen on the high-vantage point where Pines Hotel used to be.

The mall opened on the eve of the 3rd Congress. In architecture is different from that of any mall. The design was adapted to the tremor environment, with a canopy covering the sprawling structure, instead of a concrete roof. This way the mall escapes the mountain cool air and has no need for air conditioning.

The mall has a wraparound movie on all three levels—a modern replication of the rice terraces—from where one enjoys a breathtaking sight of the whole city, mountains faintly touched by mist.

On the topmost floor of the mall are the food and coffee establishments—a wise move for people will surely love to dine at heaven on a mountain's peak.

It was obvious that the by-lunch-hour stop already swarming with people who have come to see the newly designed mall. They were there in full force that afternoon, from the patriarch Henry Sy to Tessie Sy Coson, who had just been named as one of Fortune's top 50 women in business.

How will the new mall affect the "ukay-ukay," which is Baguio's signature business, or how it survives? How to do the ukay-ukay so that the shoppers could get the most out of it. Timely for the holidays.

OK tips

Here to make ukay-ukay to "ukay-okay":

... If you're just after the usual Fubu's pants here, you can get that stuff elsewhere, perhaps just as cheap. Of course, P60 is really dirt cheap. But then ukay-ukay can yield better and more unique finds that cotton tees and denim pants.

... Go for unique vintage stuff. Or, it may not be vintage but at least it looks rare—in fabric, cut or finish.

... Give the room a quick sweep. Does both an stuff that's different. Your eye may be drawn to it because of the color, the fabric, the finish or ornamentation. If you get a shirt or a skirt or pants that has any one of those things different, then you have an ukay-okay find.

To illustrate, my staff and I got the following:

... A Under-le Gabbana tank top with crochet trimming that you know was the real thing because its fabric was exquisite—a good stretch and shows which counterfeiters couldn't spend on. A good one-run, for P65.

... A mini- with covering edge cut-out design that combined cotton, denim and silk.

... A purplish pink pump—the "hi" color and still trendy pointy toe.

... An egg-white pure silk button-down shirt, the embroidery and smocking of which makes it look so vintage. Indeed at an ukay-ukay, go for the high-shirt—silks, linen—or the ruffled ornamentation or finish that gives the blouse or shirt a vintage look. It could be ruffled, cuffed, seersucked, smocked, embroidered, studded.

... We found a denim shirt that was totally frayed at the edges. But what made it different was the size... huge ruffled, one-button-all, fair reminiscent of Yves Saint Laurent's smoking jacket.

At an "ukay-okay," *Just go for the big difference.*

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Home LIFESTYLE

The kaleidoscope that's Sydney

In spring, the capital of Australia's New South Wales explodes in dozens of colors with gardens all abloom

Text and photos by Linda B. Bohnke

LOVELY gerberas make colorful ground cover.

IT is no idle boast when Sydney denizens swell one of the world's most beautiful cities. The picturesque Sydney Opera House alone, which seems to flow like the graceful sailboats that fill the cove of the capital of New South Wales, one of six states that make up the Australian Commonwealth, and the different harbor developments, will already put the city high up on a list of the world's prettiest urban centers.

But in spring, Sydney is just breathtaking. The city literally explodes in dozens of colors with gardens all abloom, a visitor can almost hear me quiver in laughter for skipping the impressive Royal Botanic Gardens given the dazzling shades of blue, purple, red, yellow, pink and orange already all laid out for him or her to enjoy all over the city.

Not even colorfully costumed rowdies, who came to devour for the Rugby World Cup and who made Sydney's streets look like Fun Towers had been extended that year, could steal the thunder from the beautifully arranged plants with their riot of colors.

Sydney's gardens don't rely on hundreds of plant varieties to impress. Rather, they depend on a judicious choice of plants, a careful mixing and matching of textures, hues,

TURN TO KALEIDOSCOPE, C2

A SPARKLING jacaranda in full flower is a stunning sight against a blue sky with scattered clouds.

The kaleidoscope that's Sydney

A CAREFULLY selected mix of silver-gray senecio and yellow-leafy ornamental plants, with blooming annuals as fillers

TOPIARIES shaped like animals are just the right thing for Taronga Zoo.

BRIGHTLY colored rhododendron

shapes and sizes.

Some gardens, for instance, are planted to just one variety, but their different shades of pastels or scarlets make them as attractive as other plots with more varied selections.

So too impressive are the jacarandas, in full bloom in spring, soon to fadeit with flowers—one can count the number of leaves remaining. The jacaranda, reportedly an import from Brazil, can very well be the symbol of Australia's policy of multi-culturalism that allows all ethnic groups to preserve and nurture their cultural heritages.

Filled with brilliant purple flowers, the jacaranda, which lines streets in Sydney's more tree-rich and historic districts, is obviously flourishing as it now hosts and holding its own against Australia's native flowering trees, including the wattle, whose yellow blooms are the country's national flower.

Australia's flowering trees—as well as grasses—are shown to their best advantage at the Taronga Zoo, which they help to make an ideal home a habitat as possible for an extensive collection of wildlife, both local and foreign.

Worth a visit

Of course, for serious plant lovers and even ordinary tourists, the botanic gardens are well worth a visit—not on a rainy day.

Established in 1816, the complex sits on a 29 ha property 30 of which are given over to different gardens, along the route right next to the opera house. Its collection of Australian native flora, impressive as it already is, was boosted a few years ago by the addition of the Wollemi Pine, nicknamed the "Dinosaur Tree" or "living fossil."

Although the pine, kept inside a valuable mini-forest, may look nondescript and not that much different from its more common cousins, it is considered one of the greatest botanical discoveries of recent times.

The Wollemia nobilis, thought to be long extinct, was discovered in 1994 only 150 kilometers from Sydney, in the Wollemi National Park, a largely undisturbed wilderness area. In fact, according to reports, the exact location of the patch of Wollemi Pine is a closely guarded secret to prevent the plants from the curious and souvenir hunters.

In the Australian capital city of Canberra, most areas is in the main blooms for spring. Houses, offices and commercial buildings invariably have the sweet-smelling blooms in different varieties—climbing, bush, large, small—and in different colors. They are used as hedge, front-door accents, windows décor or as line pathways.

THE QUEENSLAND Bottle Tree (Brachychiton rupestris) is valuable to Australia's Aborigines, who use the starchy tissue of the stems and roots as well as the seeds. The trees yield good quantities of drinking water.

KOOKS are used as bridges in homes and buildings in Canberra.

Stately trees appear to be favored for formal landscapes particularly in government buildings. But one "green" form of interest in Canberra is not a garden, not even upland, but a well-manicured lawn at the roof of the mid-sized Parliament building, where people can have a panoramic view of the carefully planned city straddling the shores of New South Wales and Queensland.

Australians are encouraged to stroll on the roof-top lawn, which was deliberately created above the legislative building to remind legislators that they are simply servants of the people.

In other words, ordinary Australians are considered literally above their elected representatives.

THE WOLLEMI pine (inside cubular fence), which was thought to be extinct, has become one of the prized possessions of the Royal Botanic Gardens.

MAKE IT FAST: Getting in-room pampered at Silver salon at the Pacific Star Building on Makati Avenue

Globelines rewards its loyal subscribers with freebies that rival those given to cell-phone users

GLOBELINES brand manager Lara Marie Luz (second from top) and media friends Nerie Rocaberte and Therese Cuenco show off their new 'duo.

Landline phone users finally get their due

GLOBELINES marketing manager Vivis Ruiz cries on Freeway carshe.

By Cherbe V. Mord

WHY do only cell-phone subscribers get all the perks?

Because of ruthless competition, cellular phone service providers have consistently and aggressively lured consumers with exciting freebies and discounts.

All of this may be good, but residential landline phone subscribers feel left out. When will they get a similar preferential treatment?

Globelines, the wireless service of Globe Telecom, has launched Privilege Plus, the loyalty program that rewards residential subscribers with perks akin to those enjoyed by cell-phone users.

"More than voice and fax services," says Globelines marketing manager Vida B. Ruiz, "we want to provide a total lifestyle experience for our clients."

A day in the life

Globelines has partnered with 37 establishments nationwide such as restaurants, boutiques, salons, spas, fitness centers, hotels and recreation getaways, among many others, where loyal clients get discounts, free gifts and services.

The establishments were chosen through a survey of subscribers, says brand manager Lara Marie T. Luz. Popular services, specific locations, even added-value preferred shopping hours, eateries and establishments.

To drive home its point, Globelines invited female members of the press to experience a day in the life of a subscriber.

The day began with some dolling up at Silver salon in Makati.

Since even beauty salon-prone girls gotta eat, we soon then whisked to Pia Maria in Glorietta for some pizza and pasta, commencing delightfully with the Italian eatery's favored gelato.

Satiated, we were escorted to Freeway Superstore for every woman's favorite activity: shopping. Since no woman could resist a good bargain, we made a beeline for the sale racks, and patiently waited in line for the fitting rooms.

To complete our newly acquired ensemble, we headed for Celine and took our sweet time trying out shoes, shoes and shoes.

By the time we finished picking gift items at Papemelroti, we were saving to kick our heels and nibble on some tapas, sip iced tea and listen to relaxing live bossa nova music at Café Havana in nearby Greenbelt 3.

But unlike Globelines subscribers, there are not enough hours of the day for us to experience all the perks of Privilege Plus.

LARA gets tattoo tips from Freeway marketing manager Nina Montalbano.

GLOBELINES account manager Joanna Gudgad and Pam Carlos delight in their shopping finds.

BEING in the company of bi-coastal shoppers takes its toll on Globe CSR officer in charge Jeff Tarayao and PR manager Marietta Ortiz, here taking a break on Celine's comfy couch.

With the cash-heist traffic in mind, we all decided to call off our appointment at Chocovoxx spa, which would have fittingly ended our day.

Personal

Seventy-seven percent of Globelines' 2,000,000 current customers are residential. In the wireline industry, and even in the larger scheme of the Globe Telecom empire, this figure is a fairly small.

But Globelines likes to brag that there are benefits to being a subscriber, which are in apart from biggest service providers. It maintains an open line of communication with subscribers through regular surveys. Through these surveys, "we have a more personal relationship with our subscribers," says Ruiz.

One result of such survey is the Privilege Plus booklet, which contains discount and freebie coupons that the subscribers can use in different establishments. The booklet is delivered with the monthly bill, and at no cost to the subscriber—no fine print, no strings attached.

The booklet was first introduced in April, with a second edition coming out in August. Subscribers' response has been encouraging that other establishments have requested to server for a tie-up.

Ruiz says they're looking at 200 partner establishments by next year.

Ruiz adds they would also devise a "point system" that would allow subscribers to claim points for travel packages and appliance discounts (similar to the loyalty programs of credit card companies).

Some of Privilege Plus' partners are Emerald Pizza, Pia Maria, Bogabong Pandesal, CMG, Emma Hija, GIGI, Jenyllo, L.A. Gear, Memoirs, Richters, Silkroad Light Bulge Inn, Perfect Size, VMV Hypoallergenics, David's Salon, Play it Display, Lydabro Boy Resort.

E-mail the author at cmord@inquirer.com.ph

LIVING in: Ice bossa nova rhythms as you sip pina coladas and nibble on tapas at Café Havana in Greenbelt.

AFTER SOME personal pampering, its the home's turn to get festooned. Papemelroti has a good selection of country-inspired home accessories, stationery and assorted gift items.

THE TELECOM company's execs go Italian with Pia Maria's pasta, pizza and gelato.

OFF OF THE WALL. On Richmond, Type 1 big-striped tee (P1,249.50), twill shorts in coffee (P1,499.50) and Type 1 standard-fit corduroy pants in taupe (P1,399.50); on Riviera, crew's new pocket shirt in taupe (P1,299.50) and loud gray adjustable-length pants (P1,099.50)

ALL THAT GLITTERS. On Richmond, taupe arrow tee (P999.50) and dark brown straight-leg corduroy pants (P1,299.50); on Kelly, black 110th anniversary shirt (P999.50) and brown right flare zip-fly corduroy pants (P999.50); and on Riviera, red poplin shirt (P1,399.50) and indigo denim's bag (P1,999.50)

Levi's reintroduces corduroy with denim flair

STRIPED. On Derrick, black brushed-head tee (P499.50) and dark brown straight-leg corduroy pants (P1,299.50)

'Cords' make a comeback

COFFEE CULTURE. On Kelly Miss, leaf green zip shirt (P1,499), striped tank top (P799) and taupe mid-length utility skirt (P1,499); on Richmond flare tops, coffee-wash shirt (P1,299.50) and Type 1 standard-fit corduroy pants in taupe (P1,499.50); on Derrick Correa, white pinstriped shirt with eagle print (P1,499) and dark brown straight-leg corduroy pants (P1,299.50); and on Abiraa Dubuc, taupe racerback (P699) and Type 1 boot-cut corduroy pants in taupe (P1,999.50).

A MAN'S and eights per soldier, the demand for corduroy apparel gets low on. Even Levi's, the pioneer and strong name leader in denim jeans, has come out with some of "cords" garbanzos after forced its most popular silhouettes—the 501 for him and the 529 for her.

Levi's saw the trend as early as March, and promptly rode on it by stocking its stores in the United States, Europe and Japan with corduroy this summer.

"Corduroy used to be a functional garment, ideal for cold weather," says Steve Romanenta, brand leader of Levi Strauss Philippines. "It has now moved beyond its original purpose."

Thanks to advances in technology, today's cords are so unlike the ones our grandfathers and fathers used to endure, or, wear to hobo Philippines. Levi's version, for instance, is said to be softer, lighter and thin comfortable enough to be worn even during moderately warm weather. Nothing will lose wearing cords, of course, while bearing aimbang gabi or dancing the night away during one of those outdoor Christmas parties.

Still, there's no denying the fact that Levi's, which knows its roots in the Wisconsin mid-in-mine in the hands of its founder's drawers-denim, will always be associated with denim.

"Levi's has always been known as a denim brand," says Romanenta. "But it has managed to keep consumers interested for the past 150 years by simply setting trends and introducing innovations."

Levi's launched earlier this year its Type 1 line of denim jeans and jackets. The line's bolder superfitting provides a perfect foil to the deep indigo fabric.

Several seasons earlier, Levi's introduced the so-called frightened jeans that took for-rope by storm but wasn't received as warmly in the Philippines.

STREET KIDS. On Kelly, Type 1 hunting tee in dust blue (P999.50) and Type 1 boot-cut corduroy pants in brown (P1,999.50); on Riviera, black 110th-anniversary shirt (P999.50) and right flare zip-fly corduroy pants (P1,099.50); and on Richmond, an orange check shirt (P1,299.50), skateboard-turbo tee (P499.50) and twill shorts in coffee (P1,499.50)

Outlasting the competition

But now Filipinos, after having their fill of overwashed, acid-washed and sandblasted jeans, have trained their attention on Levi's "super-pressed" denims, the newest reincarnation of the versatile and very much "distressed" young.

"Brands as well as trends have come and gone," says Romanenta. "Levi's has outlasted them all through sheer originality. It has heritage, but at the same time always manages to come up with something new."

Still, the brand's credo has, which is available in khaki, raw, deep-brown and gray, has remained faithful to its denim counterpart's five-pocket design. It also comes with rivets and a pair of scissors or Levi's trademark Tab on the back pockets.

"You don't have to be a Levi's denim lover to spot those hallmarks," says Romanenta.

As a global brand, Levi's also listens and tries to respond to the needs of its growing market the world over. It has set up design centers in Europe and Asia. In addition to the one in the US. The fragmented jeans, of course, originated in Europe, while the Red Loop was born in Asia for the affluent but increasingly Japanese market.

Levi's has been working hard to correct the impression that it carries nothing else but denim and a limited range of tops that go well with a cowboy hat and a pair of leather boots. Local stores now carry a growing line of edgy tops and sell men's and ladies' casual bags, wallets and accessories.

"Some of our current tops are inspired by the military look," says Romanenta. "Such designs emphasize multiple pockets, Velcro and O rings are a direct response to our mother's demands."

If cords prove successful locally as its super-pressed line, Levi's plans to introduce more exciting combining cords, of course, with denim, suede and even leather. But one thing is certain: Levi's won't be coming out with a corduroy version of its classic 501 button-fly jeans, whose origin dates back to the 1850s.

"Although we're open to change," says Romanenta, "we also value the importance of holding on to our heritage." Some things in this world are better left unchanged.

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BUCKLE UP. On Kelly, stripe bustier tanks in black and hot pink (P499 each) and right flare zip-up corduroy pants (P1,999)

LIFESTYLE trend spotting

Ossie Clark becomes vogue museum piece

AAHA-AAHH Jagger on Clark's business card circa 1970

By Chelo Bassal-Fonrodona

THE ARTS of daily living have found a place in museums, and that's good because they can lure the crowd that doesn't care much for the "really stuff"—meaning paintings, sculptures and other fine arts. Fashion, for one, is a major attraction at museums that have enshrined either permanent exhibits of textiles or temporary displays of haute couture.

Recently, two local museums have gotten several rootin rubbage out of fashion exhibits—the retrospective on Ramon Valera's formal dresses at the National Museum and the modern terno at the Metropolitan Museum of Manila. These current installations to receive interest in the retro, which was borne of fashion's inspired penchant for fashion experimentation, have a follow-up in the "Icons" of the Texas exhibit to be mounted by the Met museum, Metally Pinoy Lab and Metro's magazine at the mall galleries of the Met Dec. 11 to February 2004.

(CONTINUED ON P. C8)

MODEL Twiggy in a Clark trouser suit (1969)

CLARK with his friend, the artist Mo McDermott, who is wearing one of his designs (1966)

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Italian Festival
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when in doubt go italian.
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Anthony Dellarocca
Blumarine
Compagnia Italiana
David Meyer
Dolce & Gabbana Jeans
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Iceberg / Iceberg Jeans
L'altramoda
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friday to sunday 10am to 10pm
glorietta 1V, ayala center makati
sunday to thursday 10am to 9pm
friday to saturday 10am to 10pm

SKETCHES, at left, for first pattern and fully shirt (1971) and, above, for a suede jacket (1969)

IN vogue! since, Clark became known for superbly formal wool coats, suits and jackets. Elaborate feat of pleating graces the back of this wool coat designed by Clark for French label Hamilton (1972).

PYTHONESQUE woman designed for Mick Jagger for the Rolling Stones' 1971 tour. The canvas meant to enjoy onstage, Jagger's wife Bianca was also a Clark devotee.

Ossie Clark becomes vogue museum piece

Fashion is being used to lure people into museums

TOP model Twiggy wearing Clark's trademark cowl-front with-fur fur on a crepe outfit, 1969 in this photo by Jamie de Villeneuve.

PENELOPE Tree, fashion model and Clark client, photographed by David Bailey for Vogue (1967).

SKETCH, 1965, for two blouse designs is one of 10 that won Clark a scholarship to the Royal College of Art. Note details such as overlap cut and bib-shaped collar.

PIN-UPSKIRTS are surface of this suede jacket (1969) shows off Clark's collection of animal skins.

CLEVER. Clark took two different lengths of crepe de chine, printed by sofa Celia Birtwell, around the figure in two sentimental scenes (1971).

WOOL blue and yellow considers in Ossie Clark's first Quorum collection.

LIPGATED bustier jacket in snakeskin material, an Ossie Clark innovation (1965).

SPIRAL of chiffon seems to wrap around the body creating the impression of layer upon layer of chiffon (1971).

RED leather and lace ensemble. Distinctive quilted gloves a characteristic of some of Clark's later work (1975).

DRESS and coat (1970) designed by Clark for Radley at luxury price in fine lawn printed crepe and chiffon